

CHAIR'S REPORT 2024-5

Another busy and successful year. Our membership has held steady at just over 1,000, happily unaffected by last year's decision to reinstate our pre-Covid subscription fee.

We have around 100 activity groups, including three new ones, Drama, Opera Visits and IT for Everyone, as well as additional groups for line dancing and table tennis. We have lost some groups this year, for a variety of reasons. When a group leader steps down, it can be hard to find someone to take over and equally hard to organise an extra group when there are members on the waiting list. But organising a group doesn't have to be onerous, especially when members share responsibilities. It is a concern that annually 25% of new members don't renew the following year. The Welcome team are always on hand at our monthly meetings to provide a friendly introduction to Cu3a and we invite everyone who hasn't been before to come early to Emmanuel to get to know us. But it could be that people subscribe to our u3a to join a particular group, only to find that there are no vacancies. Remember that there's plenty of help and advice for any member thinking about starting a group, including our start-up loan to help with initial expenditure.

As a registered charity we have to have a number of official documents. Over the past year the Committee approved a new Health and Safety Policy, and revised existing policies on Safeguarding, Day Trips, Trips with Overnight Stays and Local Policies. We also updated our Members Handbook and our Group Management Guide. Assisted by our group leaders, we produced Risk Assessments for our activities, a requirement under our Health and safety Policy.

Again, with the help of group leaders, our EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) team updated the Potential Venues list and produced a Venues Accessibility Audit, to help ensure that our activities are, as far as possible, open to everyone.

All of these documents are available on our new website. We no longer have to rely on two online systems: our website for content and Beacon for managing membership data. Instead, we have everything together on one website. This is a huge improvement, but also an increased workload. So I was delighted when Martyn Speight and Stephen Morris agreed to share the responsibility, taking on the roles of Web Manager and System Administrator respectively. We also put together a Web Support team, as work continues in 2025 on the website layout, the Events function and Group Finance, as well as Accessibility.

We enjoyed an excellent programme of speaker presentations at our monthly meetings over the year. One of my personal highlights was Zam Zam Yusuf's account of her journey as a refugee from Somalia to the UK. 'A Journey through Chocolate' in October was fascinating in a very different way – not least because we were able to sample the goodies!

My warmest thanks go to all our group leaders and Committee members, not forgetting the non-Committee members with crucial support roles, like the Welcome and Refreshment teams at monthly meetings, our technical support and the team of organisers for the Speaker Programme. Thanks to Phil Bass and his team, we now have a range of IT Support for members, including one-to-one consultations. The details are on the website and in our monthly newsletter.

Everyone is a volunteer in Charnwood u3a, giving generously of their time and expertise, and we encourage all members to participate in whatever way they can. We'd especially like everyone to log into our website, charnwoodu3a.org.uk, not only to explore its ever-expanding content, but to check the personal information we hold and, if possible, to provide emergency contact details. The safety and security of our members will always be a prime concern and keeping accurate records is an important part of this.

Two of our Trustees, Helen Reid and Margaret Kelvey are stepping down this year. I'm pleased to say that they are continuing their roles as (respectively) Newsletter Editor and Speaker Programme team member. Grateful thanks to both of them.

Finally, a personal thanks to all our members, for your continuing support.

Pam Upton, Chair

Charnwood u3a

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