

73A THAMES VALLEY NETWORK

Representatives' meeting held at Benson Parish Hall on Tuesday 7th February 2017

Susie warmly welcomed all to the meeting.

Present:

Committee –Susie Berry Chairman (Ridgeway), Avis Furness Vice Chairman (Reading), Agnes Budagowska Treasurer (Swindon), Anne Marie Lord Secretary (Chinnor & District), Gillian Le Du (Henley), Patsy Thornton (Wokingham), Len Smith website support (Wokingham), Derek Randall (Thame & District).

Hilvary Robinson (SE Region Trustee)

Ian McCannah Third Age Trust

Representatives. John Orchard and Fay Sinai (Abingdon), Moira Bishop (Aylesbury Vale), Norman and Esme Dutton (Banbury), Derek Jackson and Helen Tonks (Bracknell Forest), Ian and Josephine Wright (Carterton), David Burbidge, Geoff Glover and Tony Darbyshire (Chalfonts), Peter Metcalf (Chiltern), Ann Walsh (Goring Gap), Sandra Matthews and Christine Townsend, Mike Price (Greater Thame), Elaine Parkes and Jerry Michell (Haddenham), Ann Partridge (Headington), Bill Teasdale, Ian Ross (Maidenhead), James Wright (Marlow), John Culling (Princes Risborough), Jane Sellwood (Reading), Pat Fewell, Annette Thompson, June Waterson and Nina Stonham (Ridgeway), Colin O'Rourke (South Bucks), Glenys Bettley (Swindon), Anne Fisher and Carol Bradbrook-Taylor (Thame and District), Paul Booker and Neil Kelly (Thameside), Margaret Edmondson, Jill Procter and Mike Morfey (Wallingford), Malcolm Wetherill (Wantage and Grove), Kay Whittle and Margaret Sherrington (West Oxford), Pam Hares (Wokingham),

1 Apologies:

Representatives from Bicester, Chess Valley, Chinnor & District, Didcot, Faringdon, Newbury, Oxford, Windsor and District, Witney and Woodstock U3As.

2 Minutes of the last meeting (28/10/2016). These were agreed as a correct record.

3.0 Matters arising. None that would not be dealt with on the agenda for this meeting.

4.0 Chairman's report. Susie reported that suggestions at "The Way Ahead" consultation included changing the working name of the Third Age Trust National Executive to U3A National Executive and scrapping the Regions. Ian McCannah will be leading a presentation/discussion as part of this meeting.

Susie also let Reps know that Robin Ford has passed away; Robin had contributed to many events for TVN especially with his various boats. He will be missed very much.

5.0 Treasurer's report

Agnes had circulated copies of the TVN Financial statement to 31st December 2016. The total income was £13304.50. The balance to date £8297.38, of which £2000.00 being the agreed contingency sum and £4000 cash available. Agnes thanked Derek Randall for his help in producing the statement and Mike Price thanked all who organise TVN events. In response to a question from Reps. the Committee does not intend to request payment of affiliation fees and will bring this to the AGM.

6.0 SE Region Trustee's Report

6.1 The Report had been sent electronically to each U3A but some Reps were unaware of this and had not seen it. Hilvary asked them to speak with her so that she could follow this up.

6.2 Points to note:

- 10th May SE Forum Conference with Sam Mauger, new chief executive of Third Age Trust, speaking, to be held in East Grinstead, see SE Region and SE Forum websites for details;
- 19th-22nd June Summer School in SE Region;
- 5th July SE Region Conference focussing on U3A and Research at the Royal Holloway College.

The Historic Pathways display will be set up at this conference. There will be a presentation on research, time for questions, workshops, and a room with posters of research undertaken.

6.3 A Training and Development pilot scheme had been set up to run for 12 months to facilitate opening new U3As, however, there has been a decline in new U3As being set up and the NEC has voted not to continue with the scheme. The NEC is now working to ensure that something is put in its place.

6.4 A "Managing your U3A" workshop was held in Chichester on 6th February and was oversubscribed. Hilvary requested information/suggestions of suitable venues so that the workshop can be repeated in the SE Region.

It was pointed out that National office operates several data bases and changes on one are not automatically made on others which leads to communication being somewhat erratic.

7.0 Network Activities

7.1 Events Team Report on final events in 2016

Patsy thanked all our volunteers who organise the events for TVN and encouraged others to come forward, there will be a warm welcome at the next Events Team meeting on 17th March (contact Patsy for details).

There had been a full programme in 2016 including a unique event at Oxford Brookes university in November, "Robots and Robotics", which was very successful although more students attending would have allowed for better discussion between students and U3A delegates.

7.2 Events planned for 2017

See website for dates, members are advised to book as soon as booking forms are available.

March 22nd A Glimpse of the Social history of the Thames Valley at the River and Rowing Museum, Henley. This was rapidly fully booked. A second date is now offered for 17th May ... 5 places available (07/02/17)

April 12th Heritage Crafts and industries Wokingham... 7 places available (07/02/17)

August 10th Kelmscott Manor (3rd visit)

Sept 28th Crop Growth and Climate Change at Benson. The focus is on science, please contact Mike Price if you can recommend speakers/contacts. Several contact suggestions were given to Mike.

7.3 Events under consideration

Einstein day in June

Archaeology day in early July

Gilbert and Sullivan ... a speaker has been identified but there was no-one to organise. Fay Sinai offered to organise the event. Many thanks to Fay.

Ernest Shackleton and Polar Explorers... Neil Kelly offered a link to a speaker.

Photography day... currently in planning stage, Avis organising.

Piano Masterclass, also with Avis. Please let her know if there are any pianists/groups who might be interested.

The interaction of art and medicine planned for the end of the year by Gill Le Du

7.4 Citizens 800 Project- a shared learning project with Royal Holloway College.

Patsy Thornton is the Shared Learning Projects co-ordinator for the SE Region.

The Citizens 800 project has now secured lottery funding. Currently 24 members from different U3As are undertaking individual research into the stories/lives of local people who campaigned or fought for people's rights. The aim is to create a website for use by school pupils following the course "Power and the People" as part of the curriculum. This is a 3 year project with the current research by U3A members due to be completed in 6 months' time.

Please contact Patsy if you want to become involved.

7.5 River Thame Project display Anne Marie spoke briefly about the River Thame Project undertaken by the CHATT (Chinnor, Haddenham, Thame & District, and Greater Thame) cluster in 2011-12 to complement the TVN Riverside project. Photographic records, a Natural history log, walks booklet, history booklet, geology research and a needlework banner based on original paintings by members were all on display.

8.0 Network Information

8.1 Speaker's Database Avis thanked everyone for the up-dates they have sent, she is finalising the revised database and apologised for any delay as she had been unwell.

8.2 TVN Contacts List This is maintained by the Chairman.

8.3 Events Contact List Maintained by Mike Price with input from Patsy.

Thanks were expressed to everyone who sends up-dates so that these lists can be maintained.

8.4 Website Len reported 401 hits in January and will forward a pdf to be sent out with these minutes. He will set up a link with the SE Region website.

In response to a question as to whether it is possible to determine if "hits" are from people or robots Len said as far as he is aware there is no automatic way to do this but he is able to check manually.

9 First Aid at U3A meetings – Chalfonts U3A

As a relatively new U3A Chalfonts asked for feedback on how U3As deal with First Aid at meetings and activities. Chalfonts have recognised that there is guidance from the Third Age Trust, there are no trained First Aiders and when emergency services need to be called there is a need for designated members to oversee the situation, on outings sufficient convenors need to be present in order to take the group onwards.

Feedback on the above and other ways of dealing with first aid issues can be sent to

vicechairman@chalfontsU3A.org.uk Chalfonts will report back to TVN once they have collated any feedback. The subject will be on the Agenda for the next meeting.

10 AOB

i/ Susie requested any items for the May meeting agenda... John Culling (Princes Risborough) has designed a **membership database**, which may be more user friendly than the current one. He will present this in May.

Colin O'Rourke (S Bucks) requested that someone speak on **the benefits of small groups/clusters of U3As meeting together.**

ii/ Chalfonts asked for information regarding the background/history of TVN.

11 The Way Ahead – the possible restructure of the Third Age Trust.

Ian McCannah, Trustee for the London Region was welcomed and introduced by Susie. He is a member of the Working Group for the Consultation.

By way of background information Ian explained that a plenary session followed the Third Age Trust AGM in 2016 in order to start the Consultation process. Ian, Graham Clark and Michaela Moody were asked to oversee the Consultation as a Working Group and as such he presented an overview of the Consultation to date while inviting participation from members of the meeting. He stressed that throughout the process he was to maintain a neutral stance.

The last major revision of the Third Age Trust took place in 2008. NEC Trusteeship was then linked to Government Regions and Counties, now, having reached 1000 U3As the question was raised as to whether the NEC structure is still fit for purpose.

The remit of the Working Group is to consult the membership about the structure of the Trust, its decision making capability and the representation of its members within the NEC. Members who had expressed views in detail were invited to meet in London in November. They will be re-invited to listen to the findings at a meeting in London on March 8th. (Susie and Norman attended in Nov. see previous Minutes 28/10/16)

Members of the Working Group have also travelled around the Regions as part of the process of Consultation. They are aware of concerns but stress that their remit does not include the Statutory functions of the Trust, the activities of the member U3As or their relationship with the Trust. There are basics that cannot be changed including the NEC being accountable to the Charity Commission for ensuring that every U3A is managed according to a Trust-approved Constitution.

A series of statements made in Issues 20,21 and 22 of TAM raised concerns about the NEC. At present NEC officers are elected annually, 12 Regional Trustees are elected for a 3-year term and there are up to 3 co-opted Trustees. There is a National office, working groups, sub-committees, regional committees and Networks. Disparity exists between the Regions regarding the Regional Trustee: number of U3As ratio.

Issues raised through the Consultation:

1 Variable Regional sizes – i/ number of U3As, ii/geographical factors, iii/ Trustee workload.

2 NEC membership criteria –

i/ unmanaged balance of expertise, skills and experience, (The executive Board for example is not appointed for expertise)

ii/ Regional Trustees can experience conflicting loyalties to the Third Age Trust, to their Region and to their own U3As

iii/ the number and roles of officers

iv/ the limited “grass roots” engagement of Trustees.

3 The size of the NEC

4 Status of Networks. It has been noted that the rise of Networks has taken place since 2008 and is a bottom-up movement.

Suggestions/ideas expressed during Consultations:

1 Do nothing

2 Create an Advisory or Consultative Forum/Council of 30-40 members (not Trustees) elected by geographical constituencies, function or powers to include nominating people to serve on the NEC

3 Changes to NEC electoral system: re-specify length of term of office, introduce criteria for NEC Trustee candidature, introduce proportional representation.

4 Increase/decrease size of NEC. Relate number of Trustees to existing Regional size, create new geographical constituencies, formalise and enhance the role of networks.

5 Other... review the range of activities/services undertaken by the Trust, separate NEC Trusteeship from regional duties eg have an assistant.

Where do we go from here?

1 The Consultation period concludes at the end of February 2017.

2 A report will then be put together and submitted to the NEC.

If its findings support only minor structural changes these will be taken to the AGM 2017.

If its findings support major changes these will be presented and debated at the 2017 AGM and proposals will be taken to the 2018 AGM.

Questions were **raised** regarding the Advisory Council, Ian explained that the Council might meet twice a year and the 40 people could come from Networks. It was suggested they could be nominated by Networks. Concern was

expressed that these 40 members would have the power to elect NEC officers, it was suggested that the Council nominate NEC officers but members elect the officers.

Members of Sub-committees are usually drawn from NEC Trustees, it was suggested that members with more specific skills and appropriate expertise should be sought.

Ian was asked if there was likely to be an increased role for Networks... if a Region is split this will increase the number of Trustees, neither will it address the need to have committee members with a specific role/expertise. The view was expressed that the Network is for member U3As and is not another layer or route of communication with the NEC.

However, at present the Regional Trustee is a useful link between U3As and the NEC.

Ian was asked how the Consultation ties in with the vision (strategic plan) of the new CEO given the current 3 year plan is coming to an end. At present no new plan is in hand.

As most U3A members do not know what the Third Age Trust is it was suggested that it would be more meaningful to change its title to U3A Trust. This would be problematical as the term University can only be recognised by a charter. It could perhaps be adopted as a 'working title' rather than a formal name change.

Throughout the presentation and discussion Ian noted comments and suggestions from the Reps present.

He was asked to contact England Rugby and Cycling UK (which he noted) who have both carried out a similar process and is already due to meet with Rotary for the same reason.

Susie closed the meeting with thanks to Ian and to all Reps.

Date of next meeting AGM and Reps meeting Friday 5th May 2017 at Benson Parish Hall. 10am for 10.30am followed by lunch if pre- booked (£6) The July meeting will be on Thursday 27th and the October one on Friday 27th.

NB Please respond when the agenda is sent out, apologies are appreciated just as much as responses indicating who will be attending and requests for lunch. Thank you.

date

Chairman

11/02/17

Useful details:

TVN www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk

SE Region <https://u3asites.org.uk/south-east>

SE Forum <http://u3asites.org.uk/southeastu3aforum>