

Meeting of Biggar u3a committee and group leaders held at the Elphinstone Function Room on Wednesday 17th June 2026

The aim of this meeting was for the committee to meet the group leaders and for them to meet the committee. It was a chance for us all to learn about each group and whether they needed any support.

It was also held in order for the committee to thank the group leaders for their hard work.

After informal mingling, we sat down for afternoon tea and then Ian described his visit to the Chairman of Kelso u3a, which has 47 groups and 400+ members.

Ian said he would like us to make meetings like this an annual event.

Then each group leader described their group.

Jean Henderson described what **Mah Jong** was and said it was a Chinese board game with 144 tiles. They meet in each other's houses. There are eight in the group and it is a lot of fun.

Marion Brown has run the **Book Group** for 14 years. They meet from September to May. They have up to nine members and meet in the conference room at the library on the 1st Tuesday of the month for an hour and a half. Marion chooses a fiction book for the group to read and discuss. There is a waiting list for this group. Marion has asked for a volunteer to start another book group but nobody came forward. Marion reviews each book and then puts it on the Biggar u3a website.

Mary Hawker runs the **Bridge Group**, which meets in members' houses. They need four people to play. There are six members and it is a very friendly atmosphere.

Karen Horsfield runs the **Easy Walking and Socialising group**. This is for easy walks, not fast, you can join this group if you are in a wheelchair. The walks last about an hour and a half. They end up at the Gillespie Centre for coffee. The group meets at 10am at the Corn Exchange every Thursday. They have only ever been rained off once! Currently they have twelve members and are unable to take new members.

Janet Rae runs the **Quiz Group**. This is on the first Thursday of the month upstairs at the Municipal Hall. There are fourteen members and they have teams of three or four. There are ten sets of questions and the group lasts for two hours.

Flora Whitelaw runs the **Writing for Pleasure Group**. There are 5-7 members and they meet in the library every Monday for an hour. They may write something short or a poem, there is no stress. They occasionally take part in a podcast. Flora is very proud of the group and the writing they produce.

Kay Stewart runs the **Craft Group** at the Gillespie Centre on the first and third Thursday of the month from 2pm to 4pm. They pay £3 each time. They do knitting, crochet, card making etc. They need a portable tabletop. There are 12-14 members and the group runs during the winter months.

Margaret Quinn runs the **lunch club**. They meet on the second Thursday of the month from September to April (not December). At the moment there are 28 members aged 65-96 years old. Margaret arranges the restaurants where they go to have lunch, which are usually round the Biggar and Lanark area. Lifts are offered and members pay on the day. New members are welcome.

It was suggested that perhaps a bus could be arranged for older participants.

Stewart and Christel Houston run the **Table Tennis group**. This is on a Wednesday morning from 10am to 12 noon at Skirling. Members pay £3 per morning. The group has been going for 10

years and it takes place all year round. There are 20 members with 12 attending regularly. Beginners are welcome. It is a very friendly group. You cannot be too old for table tennis and new members are welcome.

Judith Fulton started **French Conversation Group 1** two years ago. Then, as there was a waiting list, she started **French Conversation Group 2**. There are a maximum of six in each group. Both groups are for people who are confident and competent at French. Reading is known to improve speaking French so this forms part of the group. We aim to have a pleasant, stress free afternoon. We meet in each other's houses on the second and fourth Monday of the month and the first and third Fridays from 2pm to 4pm. After each group all group members are sent a French chanson. Every few months both groups meet for lunch at the Elphinstone to converse together in French. The groups both run from September to June.

The **New Start Group** is run by Judith Fulton. It is important that the u3a acknowledges that life isn't always easy as you get older. Illness and loss can hit at any time and knock you for six. This group meets to talk about the trauma our members may have suffered, and over several months looks at bereavement, local services that may help, lessons in resilience and practical help that can help you make a new start in your life. It is for five months, meeting twice a month. The first New Start Group continues to meet monthly as a group of close friends. A second New Start Group will start when it is required.

The Friday **Walking Group** is run by Mike Pelling. They meet at the Corn Exchange. The group is full up at the moment.

Helen Jamieson has started a new **Summer Garden Visiting Group** to visit gardens in the local area that are open to the u3a by special arrangement. There have been visits in June, July and August. The cost is £5 per visit and lifts can be arranged.

Ian Henderson would like to start a **Chess Group**.

Some issues were raised during these presentations:-

Groups would like more men to participate.

Members should feel free to approach the committee and Robert Dunsire, the Treasurer, because we do have funds to help groups if they need anything - such as particular premises, or they need to renew equipment such as a table tennis net, or table. Biggar u3a has approximately £3,000 at present and could always raise the annual subscription if groups need more support.

What is the benefit of having a u3a? Do the groups need the organisation?

It was pointed out that Jacky Main's newsletter is useful for advertising a group and for getting new members.

The committee is keen to support the groups and have them present themselves at the monthly meetings.

It was also pointed out that Biggar u3a helped set up Lanark u3a.

Mike Pelling did not attend the meeting, but Karen Horsfield told the group his various suggestions:-

Group leaders should do presentations to the large group at monthly meetings. This has already been discussion by the committee and will start soon.

Speakers should be non-political. This was acknowledged as being an error that will not happen again.

Speakers should use microphones. Agreed and in hand along with loop systems.

What has happened to 'u3a Matters' magazine? The previous committee chose to stop this.

The subject of Beacon came up. Leaders are not expected to use Beacon if they don't want to, but Alexis, Judith or Rod will help them if necessary.

Karen asked that the accounts be circulated and seen at the AGM. This was agreed as being important and will happen in future.

Robert Dunsire is our new Treasurer. He spent 41 years in civil engineering, working on maritime structures. This led to him being asked to give presentations at many international conferences. Robert gave a talk to us all on presentation skills and gave out cards summarising the main points to remember when we stand up to present our groups at the monthly meetings. He also mentioned the importance of breathing techniques.

Charlie Todd gave a vote of thanks to end the meeting.

A copy of this report will go to Jacky Main to include in her newsletter.

Judith Fulton
Secretary