

## **CUPAR & DISTRICT u3a**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2024/2025**

This Annual Report covers the period of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 and reviews the actions and performance of the Committee of Cupar & District u3a (CDu3a) over that period.

#### **Introduction**

An Annual Report is a review of performance and results against aims and objectives. This report starts by reminding us of the objectives of the u3a.

Simply stated the mission of CDu3a is to provide opportunities for retired people to take part in subject-based groups as a part of their leisure activities. We are a local voluntary body in North-East Fife and are a part of the national u3a charity, the Third Age Trust. We have local responsibility to attract new members, to assist new members to join self-managing groups, to assist members wishing to form new groups, and to encourage all groups and members to take advantage of the learning resources made available by the national u3a.

We are a relatively small body of three hundred and twenty or so members. We have a limited pool of volunteers to call upon to be involved in the running of the Committee and our groups. The Committee (we) have to select purposeful initiatives, and be certain that they are within our resources to be delivered.

#### **Attracting New Members**

CDu3a aims to serve the communities of Cupar and of the surrounding district (in practice, this is North East Fife). This means that we have to be visible to residents across the district.

Last summer we requested a member of our u3a, Tom Davison, to up-date the three-fold introductory leaflet. We produced over 400 copies of the leaflet and we will continue to distribute this leaflet in public venues across the district.

We want to make residents across the district more aware of CDu3a events. At the cost of £100 plus VAT we agreed to make an annual subscription to the digital local information media publication “Cupar Now” to be featured on a quarterly basis. The first news bulletin appeared on the Cupar Now blog, dated 17<sup>th</sup> April 2025. The bulletin, which is prepared under the editorial control of CDu3a, provides information of the current and forthcoming CDu3a events. The news bulletin is also placed on the Welcome page of the CDu3a website.

We want to encourage and support the formation of new groups around new subject interests. We held two meetings with group contacts during the past year and discussed how we can strengthen the liaison between the Committee and groups. A meeting by members of the Committee was also held with new and recent members, this was very encouraging - the intake of new members has a lot to offer our u3a. This is an opportunity deserving increased attention in 2025/26.

#### **Supporting Interest Groups**

The benefits of decisions made by the Committee to make fuller use of the Beacon database system are increasingly evident. Our Beacon Manager has been in communication with the group contacts and, as a result, most of the groups now use Beacon regularly and many use Beacon for exchanging information between their group members.

A similar story can be said for the development of the CDu3a web-site. CDu3a moved onto the SiteWorks platform in November 2023. Although, it has taken time to familiarise with the new system and the new ways of making alterations to individual web pages, the gain is that an increasing number of groups have improved their web-pages by the adding content and better visuals. Their webpages are receiving favourable interest with visitors. The website is achieving around 350 visitors per month, with an average of 1750 pages per month considered. Additional group websites can be enhanced, however additional volunteers are required to help create content and/or gain basic web-design skills.

Each group contact is now the recipient of any email enquiries and is dealing directly with potential new members. Groups have basic information on contact/venue/frequency and timing of meetings on their website and can enhance this with further tables of useful information as well as adding activity photographs and text.

In the past year by linking the website with the Beacon system we have streamlined the processes of applying for membership and for paying annual subscriptions. On-line payment of subscriptions using the BACs banking system have been established. Becoming a member of u3a and renewing membership has been made more convenient.

#### Supporting members

Although, we are keen to make effective use of the IT systems, not all our members are comfortable with the digital tech world and we retain our 'phone and paper-based services.

We have been prudent in the use of the financial balance, net of payment for national u3a services. The Committee have determined to keep the member subscription constant at £15 for 2025/26.

The Committee has responsibility for the operation of Open Meetings. Over the year there has been favourable opinion of the high quality of the speakers at the monthly Open Meetings. The programme comprised a diverse and interesting range of subjects delivered by external speakers and also by CDu3a members, all spoke well about their individual interests. Of course, the continuing popularity of the Open Meetings was also due to the splendid hospitality which is provided by the Refreshments team. The Open Meetings continue to be popular and remain significant events, especially for members who for mobility and other factors may find it difficult to participate in groups.

#### Results of Actions

Our numerical figures are relatively simple and collectable. However, they provide a limited picture of performance. A few figures are available and are as summarised:

- In the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 the number of members increased by 12% to a total of 328.
- The number of groups also increased. There are currently 51 active groups, four new groups have formed.
- The number of groups with a waiting list of members has significantly reduced and currently only three groups have an unmet waiting list.
- The monthly Open Meetings attracts a healthy following of members, around 35 members attending each meeting.
- The CDu3a website is attracting significant numbers of site visitors, monthly visitors are around 350. An average of 1750 pages per month are accessed by visitors

## Acknowledgements

Members, as volunteers, have carried out the roles required of the Committee during the year 2024/25. Their contributions have been essential for the functioning of CDu3a. The members are as follows:

Judy Dean, continuing as Secretary, for personal reasons was absent from May and resigned last September; Judith Finnie drafted the minutes of the meetings from June until the end of March.

Jane Masters, kindly agreed to take on the role of Acting Secretary, and is managing the AGM process. Jane, as CDu3a's representative to u3a in Scotland, has also attended the events of the latter and has reported there-on.

Mike Nelson, the Treasurer, has provided with wise counsel, continuing the control of expenses.

Eugene Windsor has operated the Beacon data systems, and has provided the Committee with helpful summary analytics about the groups as well as producing regular financial statements.

Pauline Galloway, the Membership Secretary, has carried out the registration of new members, the receipting of members subscriptions, has provided reception at the Open Meetings, and has handled and directed inquiries on a daily basis throughout the year. Pauline informs our members by email about events and initiatives by CDu3a groups and is a key part of the news bulletin group.

Veronica Kirk, the Web Manager, transferred the former CDu3a website onto the new u3a digital SiteWorks web platform during the autumn of 2023, and has since redesigned the webpages of the CDu3a website. She continues to provide her know-how to support CDu3a groups on the up-dating and enhancing of groups webpages. She is the liaison person with Cupar Now and edits the news bulletin. As a former chair of CDu3a, Veronica has been an invaluable support to the current Chair.

Roger Harnett and Frances McDougall have provided Group Liaison and Development Support in the setting up of new groups. The Refreshments team have supported Open Meetings, including the Christmas party, providing members and guests with refreshments. A "meet and greet" service provided by the Crosswords group has provided a friendly introduction for fresh visitors and new members at monthly Open Meetings.

Celia Armitage continued her monitoring that the CDu3a was mindful of equality and inclusion values in the practices of groups and members.

David Kirk, the Chair during 2024/25, also arranged the programme of guest speakers at the monthly Open Meetings. All of the guest speakers provided their talks and presentations on the basis of goodwill and without charge.

## Conclusion

A favourable conclusion is drawn from the summarised results of 24/25. The growth of member numbers suggests that we are meeting the aspirations of the potential members and are satisfying the expectations of existing members. We are addressing the key performance objectives of u3a.

Cupar & District u3a is run by the efforts of volunteers. The members are responsible for the internal running of their groups, and also for electing the Committee. This Annual Report has concentrated upon reporting on the delivery of the services managed by the Committee (providing policy and strategic direction, administration, financial stewardship of finances, support of new members and new groups, web services, open meetings and communications.) These activities support the activities of the interest groups. The conclusion presented in this Report is that these services have

been satisfactorily provided and that positive results are being realised. By promoting the friendship of an open door, by helping each other, and by running a purposeful course, CDu3a has grown into a network of interest groups with over 300 members.

However, there is a vulnerability which should be recognised in this Annual Report. We have had difficulty in securing members willing to take on Committee roles. Over the past year we lost key members from the Committee. We have coped but this has placed excessive obligations upon a small number of role-holders. Temporary fixes to cover vacant roles are not a sustainable basis for looking to the future. The requirement is for lasting replacements willing to take on Committee roles. This situation is not new but it is a handicap which limits the future development of our local u3a.

I thank all the members of the Committee and the many friends across this u3a who have supported me during my term serving as the Chair of Cupar & District u3a. Any errors and omissions in this report are my own.

Robert David Kirk

Chair 2024.2025

22.04.2025