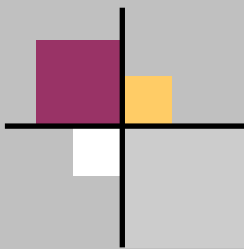


NORTH WEST REGION

Council Representative Newsletter AUGUST 2026



As we enter summertime it is a busy time for the u3a movement. In late June the u3a North West Region held its AGM. This year saw a change with the AGM being held on line. The decision to go online was taken to enable more of the region's 95 u3as to actively participate.

Geographically the region is very large with travel distances restricting many u3as from attending face to face AGM's. The online AGM was a success with a good attendance of the region's u3as.

The actual voting rights at the region AGM are the region's 95 u3as with each u3a having one vote at the AGM.

In respect of funding, the region receives no funding from the Third Age Trust and its only source of income is the annual Summer School it holds. The surplus generated from the Summer School funds all the events and meetings of the North West Region.

As Council Representatives for the region our role is to be the communication link between the region's u3as and the Third Age Trust, our national body.

As part of our role we are happy to assist and support any of the region's u3as as well as to visit u3as if invited to do so.

Gill Russell

David Blanchflower

NW Region Council Representatives

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NW REGION WEBSITE: <https://northwestregion.u3asite.uk>





North West Region AI Events

The Region held two very successful Artificial Intelligence training events on 27 April and 19 June.

The April event attracted an attendance of 177 u3a members whilst the June event had 107 members in attendance.

The NW Region is fortunate to have its own specialist team of u3a members who staged both AI events.

Please watch the region website for further AI events in the Autumn. <https://northwestregion.u3asite.uk>

The North West Region AI Team



Peter



Sarah



Gillian



Pam

Everyday AI:
Useful, Safe and Simple
Ways to Use AI in Daily Life

u3a North West

- Use AI safely
- Check information
- Protect your privacy
- Learn together

Emails Travel & Days Out Hobbies Learning Planning

Curious. Confident. Connected.
AI for everyday life



u3a National Festival 1st - 4th July 2026 York University



OPENING THE FESTIVAL



The u3a York Festival took place on 1st to 4th July and attracted record attendance with tickets being sold out within a few weeks. The Festival was once again an excellent showcase of what membership of the u3a provides.

The Festival was officially opened by Johnny Ball when he cut a blue ribbon. Johnny is best known for his TV career when he championed a fun approach to learning. Later in the day Johnny presented an interesting and amusing talk on his life and TV career.

NEIL STEVENSON TALK ON EGYPTOLOGY

One of the speakers at the Festival was Neil Stevenson who is a member of Upholland u3a and a former u3a Trustee for the North West Region. He explains his input at the Festival.



On 1 st July, I attended the first day of the u3a Festival held at York University. It was a wonderful three day event. The atmosphere was excellent with members from all over the UK meeting each other. I met up with several friends from when I was on the board of the Third Age Trust. At any given moment there were at least half a dozen events happening across the campus.

I was there in my capacity as the national subject adviser for Egyptology. I was scheduled to give a talk at 1pm. This happened to clash with the opening ceremony of the festival by Johnny Ball. You will recall his television appearances from the 1960s and onwards. My talk was "Rock Cut Tombs in the Valley of the Kings". In this talk we explored the design and construction of the tombs in the Valley of the Kings. We also looked at the people who built and decorated the tombs. When a pharaoh died, I explained the rituals for burial and for the afterlife. There were several questions from the lively audience, including a member from Northampton u3a, who happens to be in the group of u3a members coming to Egypt with me later this year.

As well as the "in person" events in York, there was also a Festival Fringe of online events for members who could not get to York. I was asked to give a Zoom talk on Friday 10 July at 2pm. This clashed with Arthur Fery's semi-final at Wimbledon. So, I was amazed that 334 people logged in to my talk about "The Role of Women in Ancient Egypt". This talk explored the status of women in Ancient Egypt. This includes deities, royalty, nobility and the working class





North West Region Chair's AGM Report

Christine Garrity, the chair, reported on the online format of the AGM intended to enable more u3as to take part in the meeting.

An email went out in April to every Chair and Secretary of all the region's u3as inviting them to participate and nominate a voting delegate. Fifty percent of u3as responded and appointed a voting delegate.

Recent activities from the past year were highlighted, including the 2025 annual Summer School, which was very successful in its new venue of Manchester Metro University. The 2026 Summer School would be held in August at the same venue.

In December 2025 the chair had held a Listening Forum online to chat with the regions u3as officers.

A workshop had been held in March with many u3a officers in attendance. Other region events included an online Peer to Peer meeting for secretaries. The online AI event in April presented by the region's AI Team had been highly successful with 177 members attending.

Planned future events include a recruitment stand at Southport Flower Show, networking event in September and several Arts & Crafts Showcase events in the Autumn.

ADVANCE NOTICE



Third Age Trust Board Meeting: 24 June 2026

Summary Report for u3a members.

This was a face-to-face Quarterly Board meeting in London.

CEO Report – The report provided Board members with an update of “traffic light” metrics within the Trust including a progress report on activities associated with the Strategic Plan. There was discussion about the need to ensure adequate controls and transfer of knowledge during all transition periods as well as expected membership numbers for 2026, which will be finalised once all Annual Returns have been completed. Current indications are that total membership will be in line with target of 440,000.

Marketing Strategy – The Head of Marketing presented a draft of the Marketing Strategy for the next three years. The strategy is based on member feedback and insights from the latest member survey, recent brand awareness research and audience and market analysis. The core issue that we need to address is awareness of the brand. Those who know something about u3a regard it in a positive light. The aim of the strategy is now to grow awareness, increase knowledge, strengthen communication and build a national voice to promote the movement. Messaging will be rooted in the familiar Learn, Laugh, Live strap line and both traditional and digital channels will be used, including a clear partnership model with local u3as in which promotion of the brand becomes a mutual aim. Success of the strategy will be measured through brand awareness amongst the wider population, membership growth, membership satisfaction, campaign performance, website traffic and media coverage. Board members felt this was a significant step forward in promotion of the brand based on analysed evidence.

DSU Project Update – Members heard that the discovery phase of the Digital Services for u3as project was on track and almost complete, and a report would be available during the Summer. The Board would then consider options and costs for the development of a new digital services system and if a clear course of action is approved, a delivery partner will be identified.

Proposed Changes to AGM Standing Orders (Byelaws) – The Board approved an amendment that directed the Nominations Committee to recommend to the Board that only applicants for a Board trustee position that met the requirements set out in the role description should go forward as candidates for election. These candidates would then be presented to the electorate in an open election. This proposal would ensure that Board membership continued to be built on the basis of skills and experience as envisioned in Fit For The Future but would eliminate previous criticism that the electorate was being presented with a preferred candidate.

Proposed AGM Resolution – As at the closure date, one resolution for the 2026 AGM had been received. Members noted that once verified by the proposing and seconding committees, the resolution will be issued to all u3as in case any amendments to the motion needed to be submitted. Following closure of that window on 30 July, the motion and any amendments would be considered by the Governance Committee, together with any associated legal advice that may be required. The Board will then formulate a response to the resolution and any amendments at a meeting in mid August before submitting AGM papers to u3as in September.

Board and Council Development – Building on developments in the first year of operation of the new Board and Council, Trustees considered a five phase development plan that spans the next 12 months. The programme covers effective working methods for Boards, and an Awayday in July, together with the Council and senior staff, that will focus on the Trust’s culture and values.

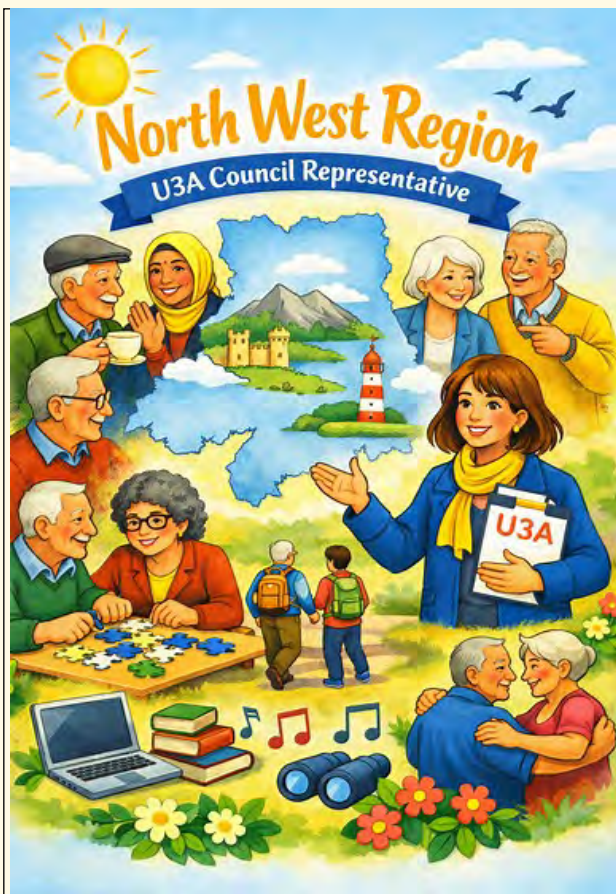
Depending on output from those sessions, there will be a later review of the Council’s effectiveness, a review of current Board’s effectiveness, and subsequently in 2027 further work on the Trust’s culture and values.

Strategic Challenges For The Movement – The Chair presented a paper that proposed the start of a strategic look at the long term future of the movement. The paper was supported by a series of statistics and an analysis of closures in each region since Covid which also covered work that is already underway to increase support to u3as. Members recognised that the Council was already carrying out relevant work and would provide a key contribution to such a review. It was agreed that the Council would be invited to comment on the paper and play a role in the start of a future strategic review towards the end of this year.

AGM Timetable – The Board discussed the timetable for resolutions and amendments to the 2026 AGM and the programme for the election of an additional trustee. There was general agreement that the programme for the 2027 AGM should be reviewed early next year with the timescale reflecting processes in the most efficient manner and allowing adequate time for u3as to submit and consider resolutions. At a similar time, the 2027 AGM Standing Orders will also be reviewed by the Governance Committee to reflect modern day requirements and language.

Application of VAT Rules – Members considered a report about a potential VAT liability stemming from reclaimable VAT that the Trust should have been restricting. Draft guidance to restrict reclaimable VAT had been provided from the then auditors in 2018 but had not been acted on largely due to significant changes to senior staff and auditors since then. The potential liability is being calculated by the current auditors together with any interest charges and potential penalties. Board members recognised that some issues still required clarification and calculation, and they discussed the impact on current, past and future accounts and budgets. They also sought assurances about how a similar situation would be avoided in future.

Please note that official minutes are the true record of discussions and decisions taken at Board meetings. This is a brief summary of the main topics discussed and should not be taken as an authoritative statement. If you require any further detail about any item, please contact the CEO.



North West Region Council Representatives

Currently the North West Region has two Council Reps Gill Russell and David Blanchflower both of whom will see their term of office expire in March 2027. David will be eligible to stand for a further three-year period whilst Gill will not be eligible as she will have served six years in the roles of Trustee and Council Representative.

If you are interested in becoming a Council Representative for the North West Region nominations will open in January 2027. The role is open to any enthusiastic u3a member willing to collaborate and contribute to the u3a community. The u3a Council's role is to act as a link between the Third Age Trust Board and u3as. It is their responsibility to engage with and listen to the views of members in their region or nation and take ideas or proposed changes from the membership to be discussed and acted upon at a national level.

If you are interested in becoming a Council Representative, ideally you should have been actively engaged with your local u3as and have a sound understanding of the management of a u3a coupled with a grasp of charity law. You should be comfortable in offering guidance and support to the Region's 95 u3as in what is a very large region with 43,000 members.

INDUCTION of NEW TRUSTEES & COMMITTEE MEMBERS

It's all too common for new committee members to just be dropped into a role and left to find their own way, which is why committees should do an induction for new members as well as a reminder for existing members. This article gives you information about it but don't forget that you are not without support. Your Region Council Representatives can offer help. The u3a office has useful information if you contact info@u3a.org.uk, and there are short online workshops which you can attend. The details are on the national website where you can also find a lot of useful advice and guidance.

Why induction matters:

It makes clear that committee members share collective responsibility for governance and decision-making. It explains the charity's objects, rules, finances, policies and current priorities. It reassures new members that support, guidance and trustee liability cover are in place. It helps new trustees contribute effectively and ask informed questions from the start.

What to include:

A copy of the constitution or governing document, including the charity's objects and powers.
The latest annual report, accounts, budget and any current financial concerns or commitments.

- Recent committee minutes, dates of future meetings and the AGM timetable.
- Policies, such as safeguarding, data protection, conflicts of interest, finance, complaints and code of conduct.
- A simple explanation of trustee duties: acting in the charity's best interests, managing resources responsibly, complying with the governing document and law, and ensuring accountability.
- An overview of how the organisation works in practice, including roles, groups, events, communications and support from wider networks or national bodies.



National Workshops

Four online workshops are available at the moment with places available for July, August and September. They usually take 90 minutes to 2 hours.

- 1) Contingency and Succession planning
- 2) Helping your u3a grow
- 3) Motivating members to volunteer
- 4) Organising and running u3a interest groups

Full details at: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/members-area/support/workshops>

u3a Matters Magazine

Are you aware you can for a small payment of less than £5 per year have the u3a Matters 95 page magazine delivered to your home five times a year.

If you want a printed version of the magazine please speak to a u3a committee member.

