

Chair's Report to Annual General Meeting held on 9th November 2021

Members will understand that the year since the last AGM has been very mixed: some groups have managed to continue online and in private meetings, some groups have simply waited for better times and who can blame them?

I must pay tribute to Mario Greening who has kept the monthly Open Meetings going throughout the whole year, finding speakers prepared to give their all – in a virtual fashion. Further, he has led the collaboration with other U3As in the area to share talks and we have published our recordings online for their delectation.

I have been heartened by the very high renewal rate at our new date of 1st March when over 600 members renewed their membership from a possible 750 and also, that since then a further 47 members have joined afresh. We were able to offer a reduced subscription for members who re-joined promptly and in the New Year, we will be looking to see if we can offer a discount again. By the time of this AGM, we will have started to hold coffee mornings for new members, ably organised by our Membership Secretary, Kirsten Freeman. Many Committee members attend in hope of a slice of one of her cakes!

We have attempted to keep members as fully informed as possible although there have been aspects of a rollercoaster in the way the news has been up and down. I thank those members who have responded to my emails and letters with support for myself and the Committee.

As lockdown arrangements have been eased, the Committee reviewed what progress might be made to restart the activities of the Cardiff U3A. Consideration was given to each sort of group as to what opportunities there were for them to meet or carry out some activities, as well as the nature of risk assessments that would be needed. The Groups Co-ordinator, Nonn Vaughan, has liaised with convenors to seek their views on what their group might manage and a slow but steady flow of meetings has begun to occur.

Meetings are held in rooms that Nonn, assisted by the Vice Chair, Tony Baines, has vetted for spacing, ventilation, availability of sanitation and contact tracing, a major undertaking. We have found several of our venues unsuitable or simply have not opened and there have been concomitant increases in room hire costs as new venues have been found.

Some groups have elected to remain using the Zoom video conferencing system and the Committee has decided to continue to fund the licences for this service at least until the New Year.

We have a new magazine editor in Mario Greening, who has offered to take on the role and we are resolved to produce the magazine in PDF format for members to access online, as well as sufficient printed copies for members without Internet access. Mario hopes to have the magazine available in the New Year.

The South Wales Network of U3As has had somewhat of a resurgence under a new Chair and I wish to thank both Michael Young who has continued as the SWN's Treasurer and Tony Baines, our Vice Chair who has represented the Cardiff U3A despite a steep learning process.

The Committee has been held to the straight and narrow by the Secretary, Les Hales, who has kept us to deadlines, produced minutes and papers in a timely fashion and has ever been a voice of reason in difficult times.

At this AGM, we see the end of her tenure of the post of Treasurer for Alison Firth. As a prime mover in the implementation of the Beacon Administration system, she took over the finances of the Cardiff U3A and set them up within the computerised accounts part of that system. Our control over the financial position of our U3A and the ease of production of reports etc. is very much her gift to us and deserves our very great thanks. I regret that at present there is no candidate to take on the role of Treasurer.

You will have noticed that many of the Committee are multi-tasking, taking on multiple committee roles as well as being convenors of groups. It would be very much in the interest of the Cardiff U3A if more members would present themselves to assist, not necessarily taking committee membership although that would be most useful, but also helping existing members to share their workload. We have a *Situations Vacant* page on the website where the sort of help needed can be seen.

Last but by no means least, I am pleased also to thank again all the convenors and other volunteers for the efforts they have made to keep the Cardiff U3A functioning during these difficult times. Also, to the members who have acted to support others with telephone calls and careful social meetings and who have limited the isolation and loneliness which can be the lot of those isolating or living on their own.

In conclusion, there is an uncertain future in 2022 but it is clear that Cardiff U3A members have held firm and found ways to move forwards.

Thank you all.

Dr Owen Parry
Chair, Cardiff U3A