



HELLO from the Chair, 1st April 2021

Well, here I am again, after only a few weeks in office, writing my second 'Hello' to bring you up to date with our planning for restarting Swindon u3a. In spite of the frustrations of having to endure a third lockdown I hope that the signs of spring and the warmth of some early sunshine are helping you all to cope. The easing of restrictions also brings hope of a return to a more normal life later in 2021. I know from your emails that many of you are really looking forward to meeting up in real life situations for your group activities. Zooming has been a terrific asset, but nothing beats personal interaction.

Some good news is that the Events team has begun to plan some activities which are open to anyone in Swindon u3a to enjoy. The first is a **talk by Bernard Lockett on "The Heritage of Gilbert and Sullivan"**. **It will be held by zoom on April 12th at 2.00pm for a 2.15 start.** To attend just go to www.swindonu3a.org.uk and click on "Click here to book", at the bottom of the large yellow box. You can then book your place. N.B. You will need your membership number. Do join us at this event. It should be fun and informative.

For the Swindon u3a Management Committee this has actually been a very busy time. Once the Government's Roadmap for easing restrictions was unveiled, we began detailed planning for **restarting our groups**. There were a number of very important issues to be resolved.

1. Firstly, and most importantly, we needed to consider the health and safety of you, our members. It is critical that when groups restart all possible avenues have been covered to ensure you can enjoy your activities safely. For this reason, it will be our outdoor groups, who can maintain social distancing, who will be the most likely to be able to start in April/May. As restrictions ease further and as group members feel safe and comfortable with resuming, more groups will restart over the summer, especially when people can meet more freely after the 21st June. However, we expect the restarting process to be gradual and some may not want to resume until the autumn. Hopefully, some of you will continue to use Zoom to keep in touch. Group Organisers and individual members will be asked to undertake more rigorous safety and risk checks.

2. It has also been necessary, as I wrote to you in my first letter, to rethink some of the financial basis of our Swindon u3a to ensure our return to a stronger position. As I explained previously, although there is no immediate danger, the necessity to fund some of our activities from our financial reserves cannot be sustained beyond this year. Reluctantly, we are therefore introducing some measures to save on expenditure. The main ones which will not impact on everyone but will make significant savings will be:

3. Some of our groups which meet in very expensive venues (all venues are paid for by Swindon u3a and some cost over £1000 per year) will need to reduce their number of meetings. Group organisers of such groups will be notified of this requirement. We are still waiting on many venues to agree their dates of reopening and anticipating that some will increase their prices to offset their own recent loss of income.

4. At present the Swindon u3a also pays the Third Age Trust several thousand pounds a year for all the printed copies of Third Age Matters, the Trust's Magazine that you receive. A further saving that we are considering is asking you to contribute if you wish to receive a copy of the magazine.

5. We would also like to make a real effort to reduce our postal costs by asking everyone who does not use email to consider doing so. We spend a considerable amount sending out printed copies of communications (such as this letter) by post. If you have an email address which you could share with us, please do so. Also, if you know anyone in your group who doesn't use email could you help them learn how to do so? Support is also available from members of the management team if needed.

I hope you will notice that our strategies for reducing costs are planned around the basic principle of allowing u3a activities to be as little affected as possible. Our group activities are at the heart of u3a and we have all been missing them. We are optimistic that, over the months ahead, little by little, groups will be able to restart their activities and return to enjoying being together to learn, laugh, live.

With warm regards and with optimism for the future

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