

Longridge U3A Trustee's Annual Report 1 September 2024 -31 August 2025

Trustees

Chair	Reg Draper/ Eleanor Hick
Vice Chair	Eleanor Hick/Barbara Griffiths
Treasurer	Margaret Martin/Tony Gornall
Secretary	Anne Howard/Janet Melling
Membership Secretary	Beverley Keating
Groups Co-ordinator	Rob Kemp
Publicity	Pat Gardner
Webmaster/ Tech support	David Metcalfe
Speaker Secretary	Amanda Lawrenson/Joy Marsden
Events	Barbara Griffiths

2024-2025

It has been a very busy year as a new committee met for the first time in September 2024. A number were new to the committee and most of the rest had only one year's experience. We were disappointed that Reg Draper resigned in November. We were glad to have the opportunity to thank him for his service and to present a leaving gift. He continues to provide support and advice for which we are grateful. We also said goodbye and thankyou to Andrew Seed and Anne Howard.

We are saying thank you to Amanda Lawrenson, Margaret Martin and Pat Gardner who are stepping down. They have all made significant contributions to the u3a and we thank them for all their hard work on behalf of members.

Membership

Membership of the Longridge U3A has grown steadily throughout the year, with 78 new members joining since the start of September 2024.

Currently there are 302 on the membership list, an increase of about 80 since October.

Numbers attending our Tuesday monthly meetings have pleasingly increased and range from 80 to 100. Membership cards are now available.

Groups

Longridge U3a currently has 33 groups. If you have a hobby to enjoy and would like to share, please let us know- we are keen to support new ideas for groups.

New groups

The Cycling group started in September 2024, with scheduled bi-weekly rides (weather dependant). Membership has grown and rides have become mainly weekly over the Spring and Summer months. Janet Russell is the convenor and there are numerous ride leaders, essential for route planning and execution.

Our book clubs (1 to 3) continue to flourish, and earlier in the year, due to high demand, an additional group (Book Club 4) was formed, meeting each 3rd Tuesday at Longridge Library. Thanks to convenor Joanne Barker.

The Bus Pass Travel group has been up and running since autumn 2024 thanks to ideas generated around making use of free bus passes, taking members to a wide range of places of interest in the Northwest.

In April 2025 a new Birdwatching and Nature group started, and there have already been several visits (3rd Wednesday in the month) to nature reserves and other venues, thanks to keen member interest, supported by Peter and Regina Coles as joint convenors.

The Garden Visits group was also established by the convenor, Ann Beeby, with members enjoying 'Open Day' visits to various local and regional gardens.

Love getting creative? We are delighted to announce the start of a brand-new Arts and Craft Group, perfect for anyone who enjoys hobbies and sharing ideas and knowledge with others. This new group is being introduced in response to the popularity of arts and crafts within our organisation. Pat Gardner is the convenor of this new group.

Activities, Courses, Events (ACE) Workshops

A new system of learning and skills development for members has been introduced called ACE Workshops. They provide a flexible way of developing skills and knowledge in new or existing subjects by holding one-off or a series of events which are open across our membership. ACE Workshops have been held during the year in Journalling, Jewellery Making and Creative Writing.

An introduction to Walking Cricket is being offered and also a session for Beginners and Improvers Jewellery makers.

Convenors' Pack

In January, the Committee reviewed all of the guidance and support materials available to help convenors perform their role effectively, with the aim of providing clear and helpful guidance. A summary outline of the role of convenor was produced, and the guidance clearly encourages the importance of each group sharing the various ongoing tasks and responsibilities, so that no one person is unreasonably overloaded.

The revised Convenor' Pack now comprises: Group Convenors / Leaders handbook; Membership forms; ICE cards; Register of attendance form; Procedure for printing; Convenor role outline; Finance & venues; New account form; Risk assessment checklists; Incident report form.

Convenors' Lunch

In March 2025 we took the opportunity to say thank you to all group convenors for their valuable contributions, without which, groups would not be able to function. A lunch was enjoyed, followed by useful and interesting discussion where group experiences, successes and challenges were shared and used to help build into our future planning.

Changes to Convenors

The following changes to Convenor have taken place during the year. Our whole-hearted thanks go to all outgoing and incoming convenors.

Group	Outgoing convenor	Incoming convenor
Trains, Boats, Planes and Autos	Phil Scales	Andrew Seed
Spanish	John Wilson	Linda Campbell
Discussion	Helen Greenwood	Mike Lythgoe
French	Helen Samuel	Derek Harrison
Geography/ Geology	Reg Draper	

Risk Assessments

We are very grateful to our group members for carrying out safety risk assessments on all of the venues that we use as well as outdoor activities. This has proved to be a valuable exercise, whilst in the main there are few or no safety issues in the venues, a number of points of concern have been identified and put right. Safety and accessibility for all are of prime importance and we continue to pay close attention to any ongoing issues.

Updates on the website and printing

The information about each of the groups on the website has been improved to provide a far more informative description of the nature and type of group activities and what is involved, as well as pictures that bring it to life.

Groups are now also able to benefit from free printing, provided from u3a funds.

In addition, a large storage cupboard has been purchased and negotiated its permanent place in the Civic Hall meeting room. This has significantly reduced the need for members to transport heavy and cumbersome items from home storage for weekly group sessions and the u3a monthly meetings.

Important direct communications have taken place with convenors of groups, and crucially, separate monthly member bulletins and occasional convenor bulletins have been introduced.

Website and Technical Support

This year has seen a major change in website software, all u3a sites moved from the Sitebuilder package to a WordPress based system. Many thanks to Reg Draper for carrying out the upgrade.

We have replaced the microphones that we use within the Civic Hall in order to give greater flexibility with 4 microphones that can be used simultaneously. Regrettably issues with interfacing with the Hall's sound system caused some delay in achieving a satisfactory sound quality and volume. This has now been resolved.

Training on the use of Beacon was made available to Trustees.

A dedicated laptop has been purchased for use by the Treasurer. A re-manufactured laptop was selected as a greener alternative as this process reduces the use of landfill space and old components are recycled responsibly.

Health and Safety

All electrical equipment was listed in an asset register and PAT tested in January. We are grateful to our three fire wardens who help make our meetings safer in case of an emergency. Rob Kemp (Groups Co-ordinator) has worked with groups to assist in risk assessing the premises that they use. The venues have been responsive to suggestions that have been made to improve safety.

Events

The Events team was set up following the success of organising the 10th year anniversary of the Longridge u3a in 2024 and all events are now under the umbrella of the events team such as:

Thursday weekly market, U3a monthly meetings, annual coffee morning, conveners' lunch, Field Day, Longridge and Goosnargh show, Xmas meals, ad hoc events such as the Preston Mela, health and wellbeing event.

We have regular meetings with lots of preparation done behind the scenes for these events to be a success such as stuffing over 200 envelopes with Xmas cards and events calendars, making Xmas table decorations, ticket and poster designs, ensuring u3a representation to grow our existing membership, catering, organising venues, entertainment etc.

Our first Ceilidh was held on Friday October 25th at the Civic Hall with hotpot supper approximately 100 people attended, it was a resounding success with people wanting it on a regular basis - the next one is on the 27th September.

We have grown the number of volunteers and have a list of people to help with our events. We are having a coffee and cake morning to thank all our volunteers on Friday 19th September at 10 am at the cricket club - this is for all volunteers whether a convener, a fire marshal, organise the raffle, attend the Thursday market, help with the catering etc - we are always on the lookout for more helpers in whatever capacity so please come along and chat to one of the committee members.

Publicity

The core aims of our publicity efforts continues to be raising awareness of Longridge u3a within the local community, encouraging wider membership and enhancing communication with existing members. We continue to take pride in showing the positive impact Longridge u3a has on the lives of older people and those in retirement. We were delighted to be invited to participate in the Armistice celebration.

This year we have been especially active with Longridge u3a represented at a variety of local events. These include our coffee morning in March, the Health Mela in April, Field Day in June and the Longridge and Goosnargh Show in July. We also maintain a regular presence at Longridge Market, appearing monthly to engage with members of the public. It is remarkable how many people are unfamiliar with the u3a, reinforcing the importance of consistent publicity.

Online, our Facebook group continues to grow steadily offering members updates on our activities as well as sharing other local points of interest.

Behind the scenes, publicity involves more than just a public presence, it includes planning and organising and the creation of attractive and inviting materials, such as poster and leaflets, that reflect the energy and inclusiveness of Longridge u3a.

Through these efforts, we not only sustain membership numbers but also draw attention to the wider impact of our organisation in promoting lifelong learning, friendship and social connection. Like other u3a's across the country, we play a meaningful part in combatting loneliness and isolation in later life, while celebrating the joy of shared interests and experiences.

Monthly meetings

Looking back over the past 12 months we have had a variety of speakers who have shared their experiences, educated us, made us laugh and even cry, we have been entertained, shown the wonders of the world, inspired and humbled.

We have looked back in time to the 50s & 60s, sailed the Atlantic with the Jubilee Trust, been to Mount Etna, Sicily and China, entertained by Singspiration

community choir and a town crier, inspired by 2 charities Longridge YMCA and medical detection dogs, educated about a meteorite and bonsai.

Technology has been an issue at times but the u3a now have our own headsets and amplifier with the committee having had training in the technical aspects required at the monthly meetings.

The diary is full for the next 12 months, with a variety of speakers and through them we will "learn, laugh, live".

Other

The u3a owns a certain amount of equipment which is all logged on our asset register and is all either stored in our cupboard at the Civic or looked after by custodians for regular use by groups. We have made a number of purchases during the year including the cupboard, microphones, first aid packs, a safe for the treasurer and a laptop.

We were delighted to receive a grant from the Town Council in June. This enables us to continue to provide free printing for groups and to see if the groups have further equipment needs.

The secretary, Janet Melling attended training regarding various aspects of the Role. The chair, Eleanor Hick, attended training entitled, Keeping it Legal. This covered several key matters including insurance, finance policy and data protection. Pat Gardner and Margaret Martin attended the bi-annual network meeting which provides an opportunity to meet other groups, share information and gain ideas.

Finance

The steady increase in membership and the addition of another grant means we are on a secure financial footing. Despite spending more on equipment, printing and support for monthly meetings (chairs!) we have a healthy balance.

We are waiting to be able to collect our gift aid from HMRC as there are system changes in process. We will claim for this year (24-25) and last year (23-24)

Nominees

Chair – Eleanor Hick

Vice Chair – Barbara Griffiths

Treasurer- Tony Gornall

Secretary – Janet Melling

Webmaster – David Metcalfe

All other Trustees were voted for last year and are willing to continue in their roles

Joy Marsden – Speaker Secretary

Bev Keating – Membership Secretary

Rob Kemp- Groups Organiser

Pat Gardner is stepping down after 4 years but continues to manage Publicity in voluntary capacity.

Looking to the future

Longridge u3a has grown this year with more members and more groups and events. We have also increased the number of members who come forward to offer ongoing or 'as needed' support in a volunteer role.

We are keen to continue to expand the number and range of groups and opportunities for members in the months to come. We are also keen to both consolidate and develop how we organise and manage our growing u3a.