

Dear U3A Committee Members,

Firstly a happy and peaceful New Year to you all. This letter starts U3A 2020 with a number of significant developments for our movement.

Late last year the Trust started to implement its medium term Development Plan after a two year period of consultation with all parts of the U3A movement. High on the list of recommendations was the need to raise the profile of the U3A movement and to make it more accessible to third agers. We have put into effect a number of initiatives to achieve these objectives.

As a first step we dropped the term University of the Third Age from our logo and its usage in the way we describe ourselves. This was widely recognised as being a barrier to membership of people who otherwise would benefit from participation in U3A and who bring the benefits of diversity to the movement. It has been replaced by the strapline Learn, laugh, live.

The aim is to establish "U3A" as a recognised and acknowledged leader in positive ageing for the wellbeing of older people and the communities in which they live. This will take time but a number of activities are now being started that will work towards this aim. For example, establishing working partnerships with other organisations that have similar aims to our own.

We have also launched a day of celebration for the movement both locally and nationally. From the feedback received to date, many U3As throughout the UK will be celebrating U3A Day on the 3rd June 2020 with local events. The Trust will be supporting these events as well as staging national events and seeking press and social media coverage for this day of celebration.

At the same time, we have started to look at the way we project ourselves through our visual imagery. We are working with a graphical design agency, NotOnSunday, the people behind the very successful rebranding of the Scouts movement, to refresh the way that we project ourselves. This will establish a unique house style for U3A, projecting the diversity and depth of what we do and the way we do it. This will impact on all aspects of promotional media material and merchandise including our digital presence.

The first phase of this re-branding project will be the availability of new artwork to support U3A Day which we plan to have available by February 2020. We are also undertaking more wide-ranging research into attracting a broader and more diverse membership through focus groups with both U3A members and potential new ones.

These changes are necessary to sustain and broaden the movement. We believe that they are responsive to members wishes to see the Trust project U3A for what it is – a movement for a dynamic, exciting and ultimately fulfilling way of living.

We will keep you posted over the coming months as the work progresses. You will however start to notice these differences in the way we project ourselves as we enter U3A 2020.

All the best,

Ian McCannah,
Chair, Third Age Trust