

Upper Bann U3A Trustee Report

Charity Number NIC100619

01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

OBJECTIVES OF THE UPPER BANN U3A

Our Objectives as stated in the Constitution for Upper Bann are:

- i. (i) To advance the education of the public and in particular the education of older people no longer in full time gainful employment in the Upper Bann area and the surrounding locality.
- i. (ii) To provide facilities for leisure time and recreational activities with the object of improving the conditions of life for the above persons in the interests of their social welfare.

This Trustee Report reflects the previous year in our organisation and is an opportunity to highlight our activities, to reflect on our achievements and any challenges we have faced as an organisation in the pursuit of the above Objects. A copy of the constitution is appended.

In particular we will demonstrate:

- How our organisation is managed
- How our activities have met the public benefit requirement as a charity
- What we have achieved throughout the year and what these achievements have meant to our members
- What challenges we have met
- That our organisation is publicly accountable in terms of income and expenditure

MANAGEMENT OF THE UPPER BANN U3A

History and Organisation Structure of U3A

The U3A originated in France where it was attached to a university. The UK model is different to the French model in that U3As are not attached to any university, though may be linked. The Third Age Trust, based in London, is the National Representative body of the U3A and provides advice and assistance, subject advisors, workshops, summer schools and a magazine to members five times a year. There are more than 1000 U3As in the United Kingdom, and Upper Bann U3A is one of these.

Each U3A is organised by a voluntary committee, which is elected by the members, and Upper Bann U3A is organised and run in this way. The voluntary Management Committee and Executive officers are elected annually at the Annual General Meeting. Upper Bann is bound by its constitution which, together with its Code of Conduct, Policy Documents and Membership Application Form, are available on our website: upperbannu3a.com. As Upper Bann U3A is a charity, its committee members are Trustees. Trustees monitor progress and activity within the groups, assist Group Leaders in carrying out their duties and organise functions for the membership.

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Election of Trustees

Trustees are elected at the Annual General Meeting, but can also be co-opted onto committee by the elected Trustees to ensure cohesive management of the organisation. The following Trustees were elected or co-opted onto the committee of Upper Bann U3A at the AGM held on the 15th of May 2023:

Alexandra Barr	Chair
Madeline Heaney	Secretary
Heather Loudon	Treasurer
Trevor Hutton	Membership
Arnold Hatch	
Paddy Haughian	
Audrey Carroll	Group Co-ordinator
Janet Wright	

Three new committee members were co-opted on the 11th of March 2024 - Paula McAlindan, Gillian Stevenson and Bryan McLaughlin.

THE PUBLIC BENEFIT REQUIREMENT

In drawing up this report, the trustees of Upper Bann U3A have had regard to the document entitled **CCNI PBR1 The Public Benefit Requirement**, which outlines charitable purposes and the public benefit resulting from these purposes.

Charitable Purposes

As defined by our objectives laid out in our Constitution, Upper Bann U3A purposes fall under three of the descriptions of charitable purposes in the Charities Act. The relevant charitable purposes are:

2. The advancement of education

Our following Activity Groups fall within this purpose:

French, Spanish, Genealogy, Bridge, Book Club, Board Games, Chess, Poetry Appreciation, Genealogy, and Photography.

4. The advancement of health

Our following Activity Groups fall within this purpose:

Walking groups, Cycling groups, Table Tennis, Yoga classes, Health and Well-Being Group, the annual summer barbecue and Christmas lunch.

6. The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science

Our following Activity Groups fall within this purpose:

Art, knitting, sewing, flower arranging, photography, talks at monthly Get-Togethers, twice monthly Sing Along, poetry, monthly Luncheon Club, occasional Theatre and Cinema Outings, occasional visits to Museums or Cycling Trips.

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Public Benefit

Our membership is open to all retired or semi-retired people within the Upper Bann area, and our members attend a variety of Activity Groups. These Activity Groups are delivered within the framework of the objectives of the Upper Bann U3A and provide benefit to our members. In carrying out activities we make every effort to ensure that our activities are beneficial and not harmful.

Most benefits are felt directly by members, but some indirect benefit is gained through improvement in the health of the population. Any private benefit to individuals within the organisation is incidental, such as an increased knowledge from participation in group activities.

The benefits can be demonstrated by our Facebook page outlining group activities, reporting at our AGM, and through our attendance registers taken at group meetings. Our Group Activities Policy Documents demonstrate that benefits are intended to be delivered in a safe, pleasant and supportive environment, so that everyone benefits from the activities, whilst experiencing the companionship of other members.

These benefits are provided within the framework of our organisation's principles:

PRINCIPLES OF THE U3A MOVEMENT

The U3A Movement is non-religious and non-political and has three main principles:

The Third Age Principle

- Membership of a U3A is open to all in their third age, which is defined not by a particular age but by a period in life in which full-time employment has ceased.
- Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a U3A.
- Members should do all they can to ensure that people wanting to join a U3A can do so.

The Self-help Learning Principle

- Members form interest groups covering as wide a range of topics and activities as they desire; by the members, for the members.
- No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards.
- There is no distinction between the learners and the teachers; they are all U3A members.

The Mutual Aid Principle

- Each U3A is a mutual aid organisation, operationally independent but a member of The Third Age Trust, which requires adherence to the guiding principles of the U3A movement.
- No payments are made to members for services rendered to any U3A. Each U3A is self-funded with membership subscriptions and costs kept as low as possible.
- Outside financial assistance should only be sought if it does not imperil the integrity of the U3A movement.

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UPPER BANN ACTIVITIES

Upper Bann U3A formed in 2009 with around 25 members. The founding groups were Walking, Bridge, Poetry, Art, Spanish, Monthly Get Togethers, and Luncheon Club, some of which still endure.

When a member has an interest or skill that they wish to share they organise an interest group and invite other members to participate. The Committee help new groups if needed, but many groups have evolved organically without help. The key principle within the organisation is that all members are equal. Activities are carried out by members for the benefit of members. We come together in large and small groups for social interaction and learning. Many members join U3A because of a desire to learn a new skill, or to take more exercise, but often become more involved as there is great satisfaction in sharing knowledge and skills with likeminded people. Group Leaders give their services voluntarily, and members are only asked to jointly cover any cost in renting the venue and any refreshments. Occasionally a specialist speaker or tutor may be required, and we have adopted a policy to cover the process of first seeking unpaid expertise within the organisation, followed by a procedure for appointing paid expertise which is paid for by the members of the group.

Bearing in mind the health and welfare of older people, Upper Bann U3A normally presents an array of activities that are of benefit to its members. Upper Bann normally has over 20 Activity Groups, many of which would normally meet weekly, some meeting twice monthly or monthly. We also have groups which meet on an ad-hoc basis. Group sizes vary widely from over 60 to under 10, depending on the level of interest in the activity. Most groups are open to all members, but some have to limit their numbers for safety reasons, such as yoga and cycling.

At 31 March 2024 there were 256 members in Upper Bann U3A, of which 187 were female and 67 were male. 176 were individual members, 75 were joint members and 5 were associate members. Upper Bann uses the Beacon Administration System to contact all members who have access to email. Those who do not are contacted by telephone or letter. Upper Bann also has its own website and a Facebook page, advising on upcoming activities and outings.

Over time, the way our groups are led and managed has changed and adapted. A number of models has evolved, such as sharing the role of Group Leader democratically from one meeting to the next, or managing a large group with a committee. Both these models demonstrate the collaborative nature of U3A groups, and how members can learn to take on new roles within the organisation. Members can benefit from the opportunity to participate not only in the group activity, but from taking on a leadership or management role within the group. Where monies are collected for room hire, refreshments and expenses it is also good practice to share the accounting within the group. In some groups members have gained sufficient skills to be able to pass these on to others, so that learners have become educators.

Accommodation

Upper Bann U3A does not own any premises so therefore rents out local venues, where necessary, for some of the activities. The majority of these come under the auspices of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council. The Hub Community Centre is used for classes in Yoga, French, Poetry and monthly Get-togethers. Portadown Golf Club is the venue for Bridge and Sing Along. The Jethro Centre, Lurgan is also used for occasional classes. Our organisation address is therefore the home address of the serving secretary.

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CHALLENGES MET

The main challenges faced by the Upper Bann U3A are:

- Encouraging members to take the lead in group activities and to serve on the Committee as Trustees.
- Supporting Interest Groups
- Recruiting and retaining members

This year we have been fortunate in that we have had three volunteers who were willing to be co-opted onto the Committee and who will hopefully be elected in the May AGM. The Committee also made the decision to appoint Audrey Carroll as Group Co-ordinator. Her role is to assist in the start up of new groups, support and advise groups as and when required and improve communication between groups and the Committee. Group leaders are also supported through an annual lunch as a way of thanking them for their contribution but also allows information sharing and exchange of ideas.

The Committee believes it is important to hold two events in the year which encourages as many members as possible to attend. A summer BBQ and quiz was held locally in Tannaghmore Gardens in July 2023 with over 80 people attending and Christmas lunch was also well attended in Lurgan Golf Club in December 2023.

Encouraging recruitment is an issue that the Third Age Trust is currently undertaking and the Upper Bann U3A is looking at ways that that we might be able to increase our membership.

The Trustees have continued to have face-to-face committee meetings in the Brownlow Hub and Monthly Get Togethers for members are held in the Brownlow Hub. In the past year topics included Financial Planning, Dance, a musical presentation by the Sing Along Group, Table Tennis.

Several new groups were started – these included Cycling, Art, Sewing and Photography. Several other groups, Tai Chi and Golf are currently at the planning stage.

We have continued to monitor the NIDirect and Third Age Trust guidelines to provide advice our groups and group leaders.

FINANCE

Upper Bann's U3A source of income is the annual membership fee paid by each member, which is collected in March for the following year, commencing on 1st April 2022. Upper Bann members paid £12 membership fees. £8.44 of this is forwarded to the Third Age Trust. The Trust provides insurance, the Third Age Matters magazine and any help and assistance as required, including national training workshops. Other expenditure relates to expenses incurred in managing Upper Bann and in organising events which are open to the full membership, such as monthly Get-Togethers and the summer barbecue and Quiz. Each U3A activity group is responsible for independently raising sufficient funds to carry out its own activities, and these funds are levied from the group members.

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In 2023, Paddy Haughian, group leader for the Monday walking group and the Wednesday and Friday tour groups was successful in a bid to the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council. A grant of £1000 was obtained and this was used to fund an outing to Malahide for interested members from the above three groups.

A statement of Income, Expenditure, Assets and Liabilities is attached. No funds held by Upper Bann U3A are materially in deficit.

Alexandra Barr
Chair Upper Bann u3A

Signed: Alex Barr

Dated: 15/1/2025