

BECCLES u3a TRUSTEE REPORT 2024/2025

I am pleased to present this year's Trustee Report as the Chair. It is a brief account of the year April 2024 to March 2025

What a year and where has it gone?

10 years ago, a group of like-minded people thought it would be a good idea to start an organisation which would promote the interests of others in the community. What a good idea that turned out to be! With the continued support of you all, Beccles u3a has gone from strength to strength.

The Executive Committee are proud to lead and work alongside those who call themselves members of Beccles u3a, all 685 of you

Planning for 10th Anniversary celebrations, started in November 2023 by Graham Jermyn, moved forward at pace in August, with several visits to the Hive to clarify arrangements regarding allocation of static displays and members' performance programme. 40 members gave their time to help host the event, which was most appreciated and many more were an appreciative audience. The event certainly lived up to the u3a mantra of 'for the members by the members.

Caroline Hiscock made 2 beautiful cakes and foyer flowers were arranged by Yvone Organ; glass coasters bearing the 10th Anniversary logo, were commissioned and presented to the 2014 Executive Committee.

A Legacy bench was purchased and installed in a ceremony attended by the Mayor, Councillor Colin Hill, in November in Exchange Square.

Anthony Greenslade and David Moore constructed a stage at the Hive to enhance the performances.

A tapestry made by Busy Beads group has been framed and will be displayed in the foyer at Public Hall

Sarah Emes wrote and submitted a report to National u3a magazine concerning our 10th Anniversary. It was published earlier this year.

Other news

From the beginning of 2025, we have actively engaged in a recruitment process to fill the vacancies on the Executive Committee. We have been very successful, and those who have come forward are of the highest quality and will serve you very effectively.

The 'Meet the Committee' initiative yielded a Business Secretary and several members who will lead trips and help at monthly meetings. Members helping out to promote the Organisation.

The Executive Committee will host a New Members' meeting in June.

Report from the Treasurer

I am pleased to inform the Members of Beccles u3a that following our 10-year anniversary milestone we continue with a healthy bank balance.

The Financial Year beginning 1st April 2024 showed a balance of £19,634.84 being the total assets held in our bank accounts. Over the course of the Financial Year 2024/25, Beccles u3a showed a loss of £802.99 leaving a total balance of assets, as of 31st March 2025 of £18,831.85.

The monies will be available to cover the costs incurred during the running of the u3a during this coming Financial Year.

Hiring venues, supporting groups, paying Capitation fees to Head Office, covering the costs of events and speaker fees are just some of the ways in which our funds are used.

We are pleased to be able to maintain the membership fees at the same level.

GIFT AID claims give a significant boost to our finances and our claim for the previous Financial Year has been submitted to HMRC for processing.

Thank you to the valued support of all our members.

Beccles u3a continues in a sound financial position.

Unfortunately, I am unable to be present at the AGM. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need clarification on any points given.

Lyn Wood Treasurer

Contact details: Email: treasurer.becclesu3a@gmail.com

Report from the Membership Secretary

MEMBERSHIP REPORT 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

Beccles u3a continues to be very well supported with members from a wide surrounding area. At the end of March 2024, we had 748 members and by the end of March 2025 this had risen to a total of 785. This total includes 155 new members joining us during the year. There are always members who do not renew for various reasons (moving away, other commitments and responsibilities etc.) so we are pleased our membership continues to grow and people enjoy our wide variety of groups, outings and meetings.

The membership fees are unchanged since we started in 2024 and remain excellent value. We offer various ways to renew or join by post, at monthly meetings, online and including the popular renewal session in March 2025. 431 people have opted for the traditional paper forms with 354 choosing the online option. Our monthly meetings were attended by 1087 members plus 18 guests over eleven months. We also had the well-attended special 10th Anniversary event in November.

Carole Moore (Membership Secretary)

Reports from the IT Support Team

IT Support - Trustee Report 2024/25

Website.

At the end of 2023 both Angela Williams and Felicity Hillier decided that because of the change over from the old, and comfortable, SiteBuilder website to the new technology with SiteWorks, and, as I had previous experience with WordPress (the platform used by SiteWorks), I agreed to take over the post of Web-Manager for Beccles u3a, to help with the transition from old to new systems. To continue supporting the old, Ang agreed to stay with us until the new system became fully functional and SiteBuilder was closed, which was an enormous help.

In April 2024 we gained access to a full version of SiteWorks containing transitions data from SiteBuilder, although not all. I then spent the next 4 months, together with Angela Williams, redesigning the SiteWorks structure and layouts to vaguely mimic the look and feel of SiteBuilder, which seems to have worked successfully.

The SiteWorks system needed to be set up with 60 groups, 150+ users, linking pages and information as logical as possible, and adding images from SiteBuilder (where they still existed) and creating lots more, and we now have over 45 Pages, not including groups, and about 150 sub-pages or posts.

SiteWorks eventually went live on 30th July 2024, and it was time to think about training convenors and get members involved, which began in September 2024 when Sarah Emes started training convenors on how to edit/update their Group Pages, eventually training about 45% of all convenors.

Trips and Outings

At the start of 2025 Lyn the treasurer organised trips and outings for 2025, and I created all of the promotions material for publications etc. at the same time I also created online bookings forms to help promote the trips, the database for these forms have now been modified for the events secretary to use by adding applications received on paper and extracting information ready for the actual coach trips, listing members attending and pick up points, this was finalised after Mu took the post of Events Secretary and her requirements were met.

Membership Support

At the start of 2025 I updated the New Member and Renewals online form for the 2025/26 subscription year. This was originally set up on another website in 2023 and is now part of the SiteWorks system.

Newsletter

After producing the monthly newsletter since October 2022 I handed the task over to Sarah Emes who successfully produced the May 2025 editions as her initiation.

The Future

An enormous amount of work has been achieved over the past 12 month or so creating a new website and writing new procedures, and hopefully things are fairly robust enough to allow time for a breather. There will always be requests for assistance from members and the committee however small, and, together with Sarah, we will continue in our roles as IT Support.

Graham Evans (IT Support)

Beccles u3a Communications Secretary - Trustees Report - 2025

The Committee role of Communications Secretary was confirmed for the 2024-2025 year to work with the IT Manager sharing the work of providing communications to members about all aspects of Beccles u3a in both digital and conventional paper formats. During this landmark year the extra pair of hands enabled the Committee to have Beccles u3a 10th Anniversary Celebrations mentioned locally in the Beccles and Bungay Journal and in the nationally published u3a Matters magazine and the online u3a Sources Blog, a place to share knowledge and experience inspiring fellow u3a members and regional organisations.

Monthly meeting summaries are posted on the private Beccles u3a Facebook page as well as meeting and Group activity reminders; slow but steady growth in the engagement with this social media has been observed. Training and support for Group Convenors updating their Group Pages on the website was offered in September and October 2024 and continues upon request. In the last few months, this role has taken over the compilation of the monthly newsletter in collaboration with the IT Manager and Committee. Finally, useful survey results about how current communications channels are used and valued by members have been delivered with support from several Committee members to print, distribute, collate and interpret the data collected. It takes a team to support such an active organisation like Beccles u3a. Monthly and annual communication processes are what sustains and grows the organisation, and more volunteers with IT, graphic and copywriting experience are always welcome.

Sarah Emes (Communications Secretary)

Report from the Programme Secretary

SPEAKERS FOR 2024/25

- April John Hammond The work of St Elizabeth Hospice
- May Robert Tilney The history of Firearms and Duelling
- June Sarah Doig The Real Basil Brown
- July Pat Alker The Silk Road Cities of Uzbekistan
- August Barry Linton Staying Safe Online
- September Gary Powell Death in Disguise

- October Linda Scoles Journey to Citizenship
- November Beccles u3a 10th Anniversary Celebration
- December Lewis Yates Suffolk Wildlife Trust
- January Silvertime Estate Planning
- February Tony Daimond The facts and Myths of Chocolate
- March Christopher Ellis Climate Change – ‘Use Your Voice’
- April Jenny Malin Life behind the scenes at the BBC
- May Tracey Mackness The life and crimes of an Essex Bad Girl
- June Elissa Draper Volunteering at the East Coast Community Health Service

Report from the Beccles u3a Special Interest Groups

Beccles u3a Members have created a diverse range of 60 Special Interest Groups, which means there is ‘something for everyone’ in u3a.

These groups each meet in one of 25 various local venues and they provide the opportunity to create lasting friendships, plus mental and physical stimulation in subjects ranging from science to keeping fit.

Full details on all u3a Beccles Special Interest Groups can be found on the u3a Beccles website.

A u3a Beccles Facebook page is also available for use by every member. This ‘on-line’ communication facility is particularly useful for those members with mobility issues.

New groups are continually being suggested and formed by members, increasing the diversity of subjects.

In particular, during the past year, the following new groups have been suggested and started by members:

- Quiz Group – meeting in the Caxton Club.
- Keep Fit – meeting in the new Sea Cadet’s Hall.
- Scottish Country Dancing – meeting in the Waveney Centre.
- Photography Group No, 2 – meeting in the Quaker Hall.
- Beccles u3a Folk Band – (*venue to be decided*).

November 2024 was the 10th anniversary of the foundation of u3a Beccles.

This ticketed event was celebrated in the new ‘Hive’ Church in two sessions due to the large numbers of attending members and the availability of space.

Thirteen u3a groups showcased their various activities and entertainment was provided by the local Longshoremens band and the ‘Bluebell Girl’, Jane Hogger.

A tribute was also given to Irene Squirrell, who had recently died.

Everyone attending the celebration agreed it was an outstanding success.

A u3a Special interest Group can only function if one or more member's volunteer and step forward to administer it.

These 'unsung heroes' are the group convenors and co-convenors. Without them a group cannot function.

On behalf of the u3a committee, and the wider membership, I would like to thank all the convenors and co-convenors for volunteering and taking over leadership of their respective groups.

Graham Wilkinson, Group Coordinator

Report from the Events Secretary

2024 saw the continuation of our exciting trips programme by Irene Squirrell. Very sadly she died at the beginning of November. Helen Smith led the trip to Thursford, one of Irene's and many members most favourite trips. Over the Christmas period, Lyn Wood researched and put into place the trips and events programme for 2025 including many new experiences, which are proving popular. Graham Evans has developed online booking forms which significantly improve the efficiency of organizing the administrative work. Many members now pay online which streamlines the process. Members can continue to book and pay at the monthly meetings. Paying on time is efficiently being undertaken by members.

Mu Gurbutt, Events Secretary.

Goodbyes - Thank you all for your hard work and excellent support of the Executive

- Committee and the members
- Julia Warnes – Business Secretary
- Penny Dack – Group 1 Support Team
- Helen Smith – Group 3 Support Team
- Rosemary Kerridge – Group 4 Support Team

Welcome - to the Executive Committee

- Janet Crawford – Business Secretary
- Mu Gurbutt – Events Secretary
- Peter Gascoyne – Group 2 Support Team
- Lynda Waldron – Group 3 Support Team
- Ruth Skipper – Group 4 support team

They have hit the ground running and are already doing a grand job.

Finally:

THANK YOU to the teams involved in running Beccles u3a

- Convenors, co-convenors and members who enable groups to function for the benefit of us all
- Julia Warnes, Business secretary; Lyn Wood, Treasurer; Carole Moore, Membership Secretary, Graham Evans and Sarah Emes, the IT Support Team
- Our Group Support Team, Penny Dack; Pauline Kettless, Helen Smith; Rosemary Kerridge; Graham Wilkinson – supporting Convenors and Co-Convenors and providing the link between them and the Executive Committee
- Lizzie Wilson, Judy Lebanc and their team who organise and facilitate refreshments at the monthly meetings and other events.
- The registration team and meeters and greeters at monthly meetings
- Lacey Baxter who oversees and tracks the expenses of our Interest Groups
- Diane Dungate, Minutes Secretary who produces excellent Committee minutes
- Public Hall Management who are most flexible in helping us to operate in the Hall
- Finally, to you, our members who support us in our work

Please remember, we are all volunteers, so please come forward to do your bit in any way that you can

‘We are only as good as the people around us– being part of the team.’ This is your organization, help to shape it and make things happen.

As an organization we rise by lifting each other – here’s to the next decade and beyond

Here’s to all of us who have and will continue to help each other – LIVE, LEARN AND LAUGH

Thank you

Pippa Holliday

Chair of Beccles u3a