



Annual Review 2025-2026

Introduction

The u3a (University of the Third Age) is a UK wide collection of over one thousand local u3as and a central organisation (The Third Age Trust) that provide opportunities for retired people to come together to learn, live and laugh.

There are over 400,000 members in the u3a across the United Kingdom following ideas, interests, and skills in their local u3a. The Third Age Trust has an ambition to have 500,000 members by 2028. This report provides some details of the activities that Falkirk and District u3a has engaged in during 2025-26.

Membership

The Falkirk & District u3a membership year commences with registration at the beginning of September and ends with the Open Meeting in June the following year at which the Annual General Meeting (AGM) takes place. At the AGM a new Trustees' committee is elected. However, some groups continue to meet over the summer so that members can keep in touch.

The membership fee for 2025/26 was left unaltered from previous years at £20 per member with a fee of £10 being charged for anyone joining from March 2026 onwards. Many members continued to register at the Registration Meeting in September 2025 when members can pay their annual fees and sign up for Interest Groups. However, increasingly members are registering on-line prior to the Registration Meeting and there is a small but steady flow of people who register at Open Meetings or on-line throughout the year.

Along with many other organisations the Falkirk and District u3a membership numbers dropped significantly during the COVID19 pandemic but have slowly increased since then. Currently the number of members is 118 which is up from 102 in 2024/25.

Interest Groups

Interest Groups are at the heart of local u3a activities. These groups comprise of like-minded learners who are happy to get involved in informal learning and social activity.

The majority of Falkirk and District u3a groups meet face-to-face, but a few groups meet on-line when it is more convenient or relevant. Such on-line groups provide some members with limited mobility an opportunity to still attend groups.

Falkirk and District u3a currently has 21 active groups which is up from last year when there were 18 active groups. It is pleasing to report that the following four new groups became active in 2025/26:

- Ten-Pin Bowling
- Cinema
- Craft
- Scottish Country Dancing

The Ten-Pin Bowling group has proved very popular with members. The Cinema group allows members to meet once a month and watch a film they have chosen. The Craft group allows members to have a go at creating a range of different crafts, and the Scottish Country Dancing group, as the name implies, allows members to develop their dancing skills in traditional Scottish dancing. A big thank you is given to the four group organizers who started these groups.

It is good that the Coffee Morning, Lunch Club and Dinner Club continue to be supported by members. These groups are good in that they allow members to meet socially and enjoy the company of their u3a friends. These groups appear to follow a national trend where more u3a members are joining 'social groups' which allow them to meet socially with other u3a members.

A spin-off of having a Photography group is that the group organizer was able to produce our first Falkirk and District u3a calendar. The photographs in the calendar, which were all of excellent quality, were of local scenes. The calendar sold for the reasonable price of £10 and the Falkirk and District u3a were able to make a reasonable surplus on the sales of the calendar. A 2027 calendar will be available to members in due course.

Details of all the interest groups can be found on the Falkirk and District u3a website (<https://falkirku3a.uk/index.php/groups>). These details will be updated before members re-register in September 2026 at the beginning of the new session.

The Trustees' Committee is always keen to see new groups starting up as this provides members with a greater choice of groups they can join. New groups appear because members take on the commitment to start them and take them forward. The Group Organisers' Guide, giving information on setting up a group, is available on the website to all members (<https://falkirku3a.uk/index.php/groups>).

*(See **Appendix 1** Review of Interest Groups operating during 2025-26 for more information)*

Open Meetings & Speakers

Falkirk and District u3a Open Meetings have traditionally always been warm and welcoming to all members. Attendance at Open Meetings allow members to listen to

an interesting and informative talk lasting around 30 minutes, ask the speaker pertinent questions, enjoy other entertainments, whilst also having the time to share a cup of tea/coffee and biscuit with their u3a friends. Other entertainments normally include short films, musical quizzes, quizzes, and Mindfulness sessions.

Open Meetings normally take place on the first Tuesday of each month except in December when it is the second Tuesday in the month.

Open Meetings continue to be conducted as hybrid meetings: in person in St Francis Xavier Church Hall and online using Zoom.

In 2024 the previous Trustees' Committee made the decision to make tea/coffee and biscuits free of charge at Open Meetings, although members can still make a voluntary contribution for their refreshments if they wish.

During the 2025/26 session the following speakers gave talks:

October – Gillian Anderson – Cycling Without Age

November – Erin Wright – The Dogs Trust

December- Christmas songs with Malcolm Cowie and Friends

January – Peter Kahan – The Universal Franchise

February – Elaine Grant – Falkirk Delivers

March – Alastair Baird – Flanders Fields and Falkirk District

April – Andy Crisp – Nostalgia Ain't What It Used To Be

May – Liz Allan – John and Annie Glenn

June – Jack Egdell – AGM/Thomas Telford – The Colossus of Roads

It is interesting to note that four of the speakers in the above list were Falkirk and District u3a members. This has the benefit that it allows local members to speak on matters of personal interest as well as reducing speaker costs as Falkirk and District members are not allowed to be paid for speaking.

An additional benefit of the talk about Cycling Without Age was that on Monday, 17th November 2025 seven members took up the opportunity to enjoy a trishaw ride around the Helix Park. The weather was good for the rides, although somewhat on the cold side. Nevertheless, all the members appeared to enjoy their rides in the trishaws.

Finance

The Falkirk and District u3a's Financial Year operates from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026. The 2025/26 Accounts shows a surplus of £1,365 compared with a small deficit of £199 shown in the 2024/25 Accounts. This is due, in part, to the receipt of the 2024/25 and 2025/26 gift aid following the resolution of a technical issue with HMRC. Other contributions include the surplus made on the sale of the 2026 calendars, an increase in membership numbers, a reduction in the cost of speakers

plus other smaller factors. Thus, our current financial position remains healthy as is shown in the attached accounts (*See **Appendix 2, Annual accounts***).

Constitutional Matters

It was reported in the 2024/25 Annual Review that the trustees had agreed to delay any further review of the constitution until a new Scottish Constitutional Template appeared. Unfortunately, the Template has not appeared so the trustees agreed to go ahead with the removal of clause 16.8 in the Constitution which was as follows:

- (8) 'No-one may hold any specific officer position or be an ordinary (non-officer) trustee for a continuous period in excess of 3 years without an interval of at least 1 year between the periods of service.'

The Third Age Trust has now approved this change in the Constitution. The trustees now seek the approval of Falkirk and District u3a members to make this change.

If the change is approved at the AGM on 2nd June 2026 the trustees will inform OSCR of the change.

Information and Publicity

Communication with members is maintained in a number of ways during the year as discussed below.

A monthly newsletter is hosted on the website and members are advised that it is available by email. The newsletter includes information on open meetings and interest groups, national u3a news, comments from the chair, maths teasers, a gardening section, and any other matters of interest. During 2025/26 the newsletter was further enhanced with the following additional items:

- The Interview – where a member writes a response to six questions which allows other members of our u3a to get to know the member a little better
- Committee News - where a trustee (s) shares an item of interest that the Committee has been discussing
- Interest Group News – where members are provided with up-to-date information about interest groups

A week before each Open Meeting, an invitation, with a short synopsis of the topic to be covered, is sent out to members by email.

The new Falkirk and District website (falkirku3a.uk) provides a valuable and easily accessible source of information about the Falkirk and District u3a.

Falkirk and District u3a is also on Facebook. The link to this is as follows: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FalkirkandDistrictU3A>

Each household receives the quarterly u3a Magazine, ***u3a matters***, by post, the cost of which is included in their annual subscription.

Falkirk and District u3a trustees attend meetings of other organisations involved in providing information and support to older people in the area, including Falkirk and District CVS and Falkirk Older People's Network. Attending such meetings allows trustees to understand better what these organisations do to help older people and how Falkirk and District u3a can work with these organisations for the benefit of older people.

As in previous years, Falkirk and District u3a had a stall in the Howgate Shopping Centre at the Older Peoples Network exhibition in October 2025. This event provides an opportunity for Falkirk and District u3a to promote its various activities to the general public in the hope that some members of the public will be encouraged to join the u3a.

Falkirk and District u3a had its own, beautifully decorated Christmas tree at the Festival of Trees which took place in the Howgate Shopping Centre in December 2025. The Festival attracted large numbers which can only be good for promoting the activities of Falkirk and District u3a.

Our organisation locally

The Committee membership for 2025/26 was as follows:

Committee Officers

- Chair - Peter Kahan
- Vice-chair - Dorothy Ferrie
- Secretary - Ruth Morris
- Treasurer - Jim Hanmer

Committee Members and Trustees

- Interest Group Coordinator - Vacancy
- Membership Secretary – Toni Smillie (March 24 – present)
- Speaker Secretary – Jack Egdell
- Publicity – John Giovanacci (February 23-present)
- ICT Support – Toni Smillie

Dorothy Ferrie has kindly continued to do the duties of the Interest Group Coordinator on a temporarily basis until someone else agrees to take on the full role on a more permanent basis.

The Trustees' Committee has met on a monthly basis throughout the 2025/26 session shortly before the Open Meetings. These Committee meetings were mainly held on Zoom but a few meetings took place face-to-face.

It should be noted that all members of the Committee are Trustees of the Scottish charity Sc048974.

What has been achieved this year?

There continues to be a steady increase in membership numbers from the low point during the COVID pandemic.

The Falkirk and District u3a published its first Calendar (for 2026) raising additional funds for the u3a.

Falkirk and District u3a displayed a beautifully decorated Christmas tree at the Festival of Trees in December 2025.

Four new groups (Ten-Pin Bowling, Cinema, Craft and Scottish Country Dancing) were started up in session 2025/26.

At the Open Meetings there have been a number of speakers who have given interesting and informative talks on a variety of topics.

As in the previous year, the Trustees' Committee held a meeting with new members to welcome them to the Falkirk and District u3a.

The Trustees' Committee met with interest group organisers to thank them for all the work they do on behalf of their groups and discuss any issues relevant to the continued effective running of the groups.

There has been a modest uptake of the new discretionary fund designed to support new and existing group activities.

Looking Forward

Subject to approval at the 2025/26 AGM, the new Safeguarding Policy will be implemented in session 2026/27.

The Falkirk and District u3a will publish a 2027 Calendar.

The Trustees' Committee will continue to explore new ways of promoting Falkirk and District u3a locally with the intention of attracting new members.

Interest groups will still have an opportunity to access a new discretionary fund specifically designed to support new and existing group activity.

The agenda of Open Meetings will continue to remain in line with the wishes of members.

Members will be encouraged to be more participative, particularly in setting up new interest groups, in line with the ethos of the u3a. Such participation may also include contributing to the work of the trustees/assisting the trustees in their role.

The Trustees' Committee will continue to hold a meeting with new members to welcome them to the Falkirk and District u3a.

The Trustees' Committee will continue to hold at least one meeting a year with group organisers to identify what further the Committee can do to support the current and any future interest groups.

Thank You

As usual it is always important to thank those who have been involved in the work of the Falkirk and District u3a in 2025/26. A big thank you goes to the following people:

All Interest Group Organisers, who give of their time to help other members pursue their interests.

Thank you to all the speakers who gave talks at the 2025/26 Open Meetings.

Jack Egdell for producing the 2026 Falkirk and District u3a calendar and for all his work at the Festival of Trees.

John Giovanacci and Jack Egdell for liaising with local external organisations and to John for maintaining the Falkirk and District u3a Facebook page.

The volunteers, who work quietly in the background, who have helped to keep Falkirk and District u3a running. These include those who operate the technical equipment at our hybrid Open Meetings (George Love supported by Toni Smillie), Zoom organiser (Pamela Chambers), kitchen helper (Morven Mack) and Dorothy Ferrie and Ruth Morris who greet everyone in the foyer at our Open Meetings.

St Francis Xavier Church Hall for the use of their hall.

To all the members for being a part of the Falkirk and District u3a.

Thank you to our trustees for their continuing hard work and commitment to Falkirk and District u3a.