

# Network News

## December 2020 edition



### We're in! All systems go at George Place

*We're a step closer towards having a space again for our group activities.*

Well done Anne and Willie Webster who received the keys on 12th November to what will be our new Activity Centre on George Place in Bathgate.

We have had huge support to make this happen and are especially grateful to John Kerry, commercial property manager at building owners Scotmid Co-op, who has been helpful and supportive throughout the process. Thanks also to Thomas Duncan Solicitors for helping us negotiate mutually agreeable terms and conditions, and to WLVS and the Communities Recovery Fund for their financial assistance (see page 11).

The move has been welcomed by

local organisations such as the Community Council and Enterprising Bathgate who are delighted to see this vacant shop put back into use.

We have been busy sourcing suitable furniture and in this respect are grateful to the Salvation Army in Fauldhouse for the donation of chairs following their own refurbishment.

Now for the task of refreshing the interior, sorting out signage and the shop front, finalising Environmental Health approval and everything else that's needed to make this a bright and airy space to welcome back our groups.

### Convener's Foreword

This has been an exciting - and exhausting - couple of months as we've worked hard to renovate the Members' Hub in Linbar House whilst negotiating entry to our new Activity Centre in the centre of Bathgate.

It's great to see it coming together and we can't wait to see it all finished and back in use by our members.

If you've received this newsletter you should also have received your bag of Christmas goodies. With current restrictions it was inevitable that there would be no Network Christmas Party this year. But we wanted to do something for you all in lieu of a party, and so the committee have been planning, sourcing and making your Christmas bags for some time now.

Particular thanks to everyone who has made a contribution to the bags and to Kath Fraser and Elizabeth Florence who with help from fellow crafters have been very busy indeed. We hope you enjoy them.

My very best wishes to you all this Christmas,

*Anne Webster, Convener*



## Major Update at Members' Hub

*In our last issue of this newsletter, by way of preparing you for changes at the Hub when we are able to return, we told you about the Covid-safe measures that we were implementing.*

*Since then, there have been a good deal more changes, which are still ongoing.*

With the new lockdown restrictions in place, and the extended enforced period of closure, the committee decided to welcome you back with a whole fresh new look inside your Hub.

It was felt that there would never be a better time, whilst we were closed for an extended period, to undergo a complete renovation. But the real deciding factor was the generosity of external funders who have made

possible all the new work, as well as landlord Ceebar Properties' support and partial funding for new ceiling tiles and a new toilet fan.

In a top to bottom refresh, the tired old ceiling tiles have been replaced, which, with new lighting, instantly creates a light and bright space.

All walls and woodwork have been painted white, the pipes and boiler boxed in, and new slimline cabinets have been fitted to store away all our files and equipment which will create a calming, clutter-free space to the back of the office.

The kitchen and toilet areas have also been streamlined, with built in storage to keep these areas tidy and hygienic.

New custom-built display shelving is being installed for our books,



*John Reid and Willie Webster refreshing the walls at the Hub*

video, leaflets and other materials to the right of the entrance, and new, colourful notice boards have been installed.

The floor, which turned out to be very uneven indeed, will be screeded after which smart new, easily cleaned laminate flooring can be laid.

Thanks to Willie Webster, who is both project manager and, in many cases, tradesman, for much of the work, and to all those who have helped with tasks associated with the work, including painting, transporting and storing of our furniture and equipment whilst the work was underway.

Work is still very much underway. But we can't wait to welcome you back to our bright new Hub.



*Bright new noticeboards at the Hub*



## 2020 Network Members Survey

*We're delighted that so many of you took the time to complete our latest survey, conducted during the period 8<sup>th</sup>- 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020. The survey was issued to every member (432) by email or by post.*

In total 145 surveys were completed, a fantastic 34% return. 105 of these were completed online, with 40 being returned by post.

The purpose of the survey is to guide the Network's Committee as they take forward the development of the organisation.

The results will also be of interest to our many funders who must ensure that their support meets our stated aim of delivering activities to combat social isolation in older people.

In the survey we wanted to know how beneficial members find each of our main activities.

The Network is very proud to have over 50 activity groups, run by volunteer group leaders. The results clearly showed that this is what members find most beneficial, closely followed by day trips, social events and monthly meetings, which all scored around the same. Holidays and new member meetings scored the lowest.

Our Hub is currently open Monday to Friday, 10am – 2pm. According to the survey results, the most important day for the Hub to be open is a Friday with the least number finding opening on a Thursday useful. Saturday morning was suggested by some as a possible day to open instead.

We asked about what you would like to see if we had bigger

premises. Some great suggestions were made, with the most requested being a coffee and drop in area.

Minutes, email and newsletters were clearly the preferred means of communication with Facebook scoring as least worthwhile for most. 82% of responders said they found communicating with the Hub easy.

We are pleased that 99% of respondents have said that you have heard from us since lockdown, with 92% feeling that we have done everything we could given the circumstances we were in. 74 (51%) said that they would be happy to restart activities indoors or outdoors, when permitted. A further 23 (16%) said they would be happy to return to outdoor activities.

When asked if joining WL50+ had met expectations, 98.5% of respondents said that it had, with 96.9% feeling that their membership was good value for money. Many of the remaining 3.1% had joined us early this year, just before lockdown.

While positive comments are great to receive, comments showing where we can improve are really beneficial and enable us to adapt to make sure WL50+ continues to provide what our members are looking for. Over the coming months, we will be looking at these suggestions to identify areas for improvement.

*Copies of the survey results are available on request.*



*Here's what you told us about the Network's impact on your lives.*

"It's good to be a member of a group to give and receive help in many different aspects"

"It gets me out and about. I would recommend it to anyone who is in the same position as myself"

"I am a member of 2 groups and a group leader of 1. These activities give me purpose and I look forward to taking part"

"It is a good way for anyone on their own to make friends, have holidays, day trips and the social side"

"The 50+ organisation is a great support to people who live alone, are bereaved, are lonely or want to meet new friends and have a purpose in their lives. Many people envy what we have and wish such an organisation was in their area"

"It helped me meet new people and take part in social activities when I moved to this area!"

"I believe being a member has been a life changing experience for me personally"

"It has helped me at quite a difficult time of my life and I know of other members who feel the same"

"It's great for meeting people. If I had known about it I would have joined years ago"

"It is very important to my well-being to be able to socialise with people in my own age group"



## Our thanks to Barbara

*We're sure you'll all join us in sending good wishes and thanks to Barbara Haddow, who has recently stepped down as a member of the 50+ Network Committee.*

As a long-standing Committee member - since 2012 - Barbara's remit was Catering and Rosemount Gardens Liaison. She was due to stand down in May when we should have had our AGM, but continued beyond that until late summer.

Convener Anne Webster surprised Barbara at her home with a bouquet of flowers as a mark of the Network's appreciation for all she has done.



## Barbara's Dumpling Recipe

*We asked Barbara to share one of her recipes with us for the newsletter. Here's a real Winter warmer!*

### Ingredients:

1-3/4 lbs flour \* 4 ozs margarine  
 2 TBS Treacle \* 2 TBS Syrup  
 1 tsp baking powder  
 6 tsp mixed spice \* 6 tsp cinnamon  
 3/4 cup sugar \* 1 tsp salt  
 2 eggs \* 1 grated apple  
 25g currants \* 25g raisins  
 Cold water

### Method:

Place flour in bowl. Add margarine and rub in. Add treacle, baking powder and syrup to mixture. Add cinnamon, spice, sugar and salt. Mix. Break in eggs and mix. Add currants and raisins and mix. Add apple and mix with enough cold water to make a stiff paste.

Put mixture into a greased wet cloth. Gather firmly at neck and tie with string.

Put into pot 1/4 filled with boiling water. Place a plate in

pot below dumpling to prevent it from sticking to the pot.

Boil quickly for 1/4 hour then reduce to simmer for 3 hours. Add more water if necessary.





## Out and About

*It may be winter, but wrap up warmly and there's no reason not to take advantage of those crisp clear days to get out and about. Whilst we'd love to start up our monthly coach trips again, there's no getting away from the fact that it may be some way into next year before we are able to do so. In the meantime here's some ideas of places to visit when we emerge from Level 4. They are all within easy reach of West Lothian.*

A heritage trail created by Forestry Commission Scotland around the ruins of the **Wilsontown Ironworks**, located near the village of Forth, will be of interest to anyone interested in industrial heritage. Once one of the most important sites of Scotland's Industrial revolution, the ironworks were founded by the three Wilson brothers in 1779, and operated until 1842. In its heyday 2,000 people were employed there; hard to imagine now that nature has largely reclaimed the land. The site is easily navigated along clearly marked paths with excellent informative notice boards. Parking is available but make your way into Forth for refreshments and facilities.

Continuing the industrial heritage theme, well worth a visit is the once derelict **Colinton Tunnel** situated along the Water of Leith Walkway by Spylaw Park in Edinburgh. It has been transformed by a beautiful 140m mural celebrating the industrial, social, artistic and literary history of the local

community. It took artist Chris Rutterford over two years to completely light up the once dark and scary Victorian railway tunnel with the mural which depicts Robert Louis Stevenson's poem 'A view from a railway carriage'. 2,000 square metres of tunnel have been covered with beautiful artworks that depict various elements of the poem as well as telling the history of the community at the same time along the abandoned railway line. "From a Railway Carriage" is illustrated in text on one wall of the tunnel, and links across the roof to other visuals on the opposite side which represent the rich heritage of authors, poets, painters and other



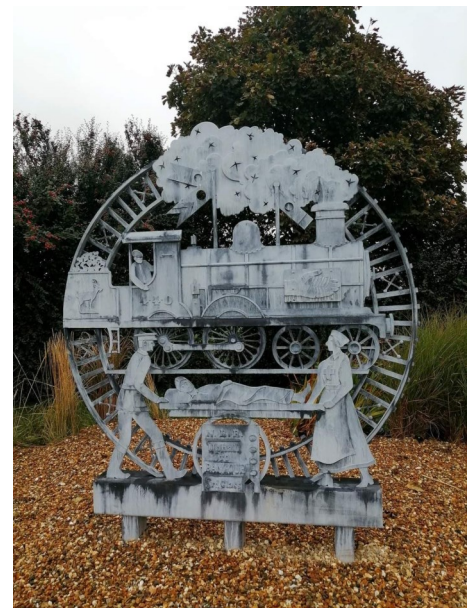
individuals and organisations who have had links with Colinton throughout the years.

Closer to home, some members have been discovering the **Dechmont UFO Trail**. Did you know that Dechmont Wood was the site of a very unusual encounter known as the 'Robert Taylor' incident? One of the most incredible close encounter cases ever to have occurred in Scotland occurred on November 9th, 1979 when Livingston Development Corporation forestry worker Robert (Bob) Taylor claims he encountered a hovering dome shaped object above a clearing in Dechmont Woods near Livingston. He then claims to have been 'attacked' by two spherical objects with spikes that rushed out from beneath this object and pulled him towards the larger object. You can follow the way-marked trail from Dechmont Law to discover more about this unusual event and to

enjoy the woodlands, wildlife and views of the Law.

Whilst in Dechmont, also take the time to see the recently installed new sculptures at each end of Dechmont village. Commissioned by the community council and fabricated by P Johnson & Company at Ratho Byres Forge, the sculptures which were installed in August 2020 reflect important aspects of the history of Dechmont – a key part of which is the Bangour village hospital, now undergoing development into new housing. The hospital was used during WW1 and WW2 to treat soldiers, and specialised in psychiatric work between the wars and after. Since access to the hospital was poor, a private railway line was built, branching from the former Edinburgh and Bathgate railway line at Uphall. The railway line was closed after WW2 in 1921, and the hospital closed in 2004.

The first sculpture features the spire of St Mary's Bangour Memorial Church, surrounded by various elements that reflect recuperative life and regrowth in a community setting. The second sculpture depicts the railway tracks and the 440 locomotive that pulled the



carriages to Bangour, especially taking the wounded soldiers during WW1.



## Local Interest - My Role in Balbardie Park's Memorial

*My name is Jim Swan, I am a member of Fifty Plus. The story I wish to tell is of my proud role in bringing about the International Workers Memorial in Balbardie Park*



By way of background, I was Secretary of the Scottish Hazards Group, attending the UK Hazards Group in England. Tommy Hart, Co-ordinator of Birmingham Hazards Centre, described attending a press conference in New York as a guest member of the AFL-CIO, the organisation representing all of the American Trade Unions, their equivalent of our TUC.

Press reporters and journalists crowded into the News Conference for "Workers Memorial Day" which is held on the 28<sup>th</sup> April every year. Inside the hall, all along one wall, there were candles burning.

The conference began by all the lights being switched off. Then the

candles were extinguished, one by one, leaving the hall in total darkness. A voice said: "Every candle extinguished was an American worker who lost their life at or because of work." The lights were switched on again and the conference began in earnest.

Tommy was so impressed that he reported it to the Hazards Campaign Steering Group. He suggested that if we in Europe used the same date and organised a "Workers Memorial Day" it could become an "International Workers Memorial Day". He suggested putting a proposal to the attendees of the European Conference which had representation from all over

Europe, encouraging them to adopt the same date in their own country so that it could become an international event promoting better safety in the work place. This eventually happened in Europe and beyond.

The UK Hazards Campaign adopted it and I introduced it into Scotland. I was also the Secretary of the Lothian Federation of Trade Union Trade Councils which is made up of Edinburgh, Midlothian, East and West Lothian Trade Union Councils. They all agreed to approach their local branch to plant a tree in each of the Lothian Council Areas. West Lothian District Council (WLDC) agreed to our request and Convenor Jimmy McGinley planted



a tree in the Bathgate Sports Park on the first “International Workers Memorial Day” in West Lothian.

The West Lothian TUC along with WLDC agreed to adopt “International Workers Memorial Day”. It became an annual event and was also developing as a world event.

Millie Sommerville, then Chair of West Lothian TUC, was also a member of Bathgate Community Council. She suggested that the Community Council apply to create an “International Workers Memorial Garden” as its project for that year. This was agreed and it was sited near the boiler house of Balbardie Colliery which had exploded killing four men, a meaningful place for a memorial garden.

Millie’s husband Matt, the WLTUC Treasurer, along with Vice Chair, John Neil, used some of the money to purchase two large black granite blocks from the local Mason. He scribed the Hazard’s Worker’s Memorial slogan of the original Canadian Worker’s Memorial Day **“Mourn the Dead Fight for the Living”** on one of them and attached the plaque from the memorial tree onto the other. The floral garden was established, and the memorial tree transplanted into the centre of the garden.

The next development was at the Millennium. The WLTUC applied to the National Lottery, and was awarded money to create an “International Workers Memorial” at the Memorial Garden. Advice and assistance to create the monument came from EIS art

teacher, Alex Simpson, who specialised in sculptures. The Amalgamated Foundry Workers Union Shop Stewards’ Convener, Jimmy Easton, and Branch Secretary, Andy Sharp, approached their employer Edgar Allen & Co Ltd, the local Bathgate Foundry, previously known as “Menzies”. The company agreed to donate a sphere and fabrication steel and allowed Jimmy to use the facilities to develop the design by burning out a globe atlas of the earth, and to fabricate the plinth as part of the design. Elaine Harvey, my daughter, was the Production Manager of Livingston Precision Ltd, who agreed to supply the material and the use of the state-of-the-art laser machine to make three discs scribed with the International Workers Memorial Slogan.

Viv Towsey, Treasurer of WLTUC, approached local businesses for help. Blue Circle Cement donated the cement, West Lothian Council the bricks and BLES Training youths did the shuttering for the cement base.

The final Memorial was unveiled and presented to the community by First Minister Henry McLeish and STUC President David Blieman.

The monument is unique. It wasn’t created by a commissioned sculptor but by local craftsmen with donations from local businesses. It is truly a community project of which we should all be proud.

## We want to hear from you

Do you have a story you’d like to share with other members? Or an idea for a topic you’d like us to cover?

We’d love to know what you’ve been doing over the last few months.

Have you mastered the use of a new technology, taken up a new hobby, or found new places to walk to?

Perhaps you’ve been one of the brave souls who have ventured abroad on a wee holiday or rediscovered the delights of a “staycation” or holiday at home?

Send us your stories and we’ll aim to include them in the next issue of Network News.

## AGM Postponed

*In our last newsletter we asked for your mandate to postpone our AGM once more, until 2021.*

We received only one objection to this and so our Annual General meeting will be postponed until May 2021.

A copy of the Network’s accounts to 31st March 2020 will be made available to members on request by either email or post.



## Holidays under the new rules

*50+ members love a holiday, so when we asked for members' stories it was good to hear that some of our members are still managing to get away for a wee break. Here Liz Park shares her and Bill's experience of their recent holiday.*

Recently Bill and I went with Strathmore Travel to Strathpeffer. We had our temperatures taken before we went on the coach.

Covid19 safety measures were in place, both on the coach and the Hotel.

We visited Ullapool, Gairloch, Portree, Inverness and Cromerty.

The weather was mixed as you would expect in Scotland. We thoroughly enjoyed our trip and it was so nice to get away.



*Liz and Bill Park*

## My First Car

*We all remember learning to drive and our first car, even though for most of us it was a very long time ago.*

*Our Vice Convener, Jim Dixon, who has been driving now for 56 years after passing his test at the second attempt in 1964 (aged 18), reminisces about this important rite of passage.*

"In 1961 I started work earning £3:12s:6d a week in Greigs Emporium in Bathgate as a basement boy. The following year I transferred to Greigs Electrical Department to start my apprenticeship, when my wage increased to £3:16s:8d a week. My chance to save for my own car!

I took driving lessons with a driving school in a Ford Anglia. My father was angry when I failed my driving test at the first attempt. He decided I would do better if he taught me in his car, an Austin A35, made by the BMC from 1956, and bought second hand by my father for £400 in 1961 from Arnold Clark at Charing Cross in Glasgow.

By the time I passed my driving test in 1964 I had built up some savings.

My father was due to change his car so he asked if I was interested in buying the A35 for £120. I knew it was well looked after, so that became my first car.

The start of freedom, opportunity

and very limited use of buses. It was my transport to work, to my day release to the Edinburgh Ramsay Technical College and eventually to Napier College to do my City and Guilds Certificates in Electrical Contracting. Once qualified as a tradesman, my car enabled me to chase more highly paid jobs.

My ambition however was to own a Mini, with basics such as sliding windows, a cord to open the door, fixed seat belts and a floor foot button for dipping the headlights. The Mini first rolled off the production line in 1959 and sold new for £375. It was however 1966 before owning my first Mini became a reality. I have since owned a Mini One and currently own a 2018 Mini Countryman Cooper."



## Remote Raffle Prize Winners

*We're pleased to announce the winners of October's remote raffle.*

The raffle was drawn by hub co-ordinators Suzanne and Teresa on the video conferencing platform Zoom using a number randomizer with members' membership numbers.

The Zoom call was recorded for transparency as Teresa and Suzanne checked the spreadsheet and called out the members' names.

Development Officer Tracy delivered the prizes in person and took the opportunity to take photos of the winners.

The lucky winners, the prizes they won and their membership numbers are as follows:

- Janine Bryce** (116) *Talisker*
- Gwen Dennison**(402) *Gin*
- Jean Ward** (57) *Sparkling Wine*
- Margaret Shanks** (131) *Candle & Wine*
- John Cameron** (436) *Candle & Ginger Wine*
- Irene Miller** (443) *Wine*
- Irene Calder** (143) *Wine*
- Nancy Aitken** (172) *Eau de Toilette & Wine*
- Alison Clark** (434) *Candle & Wine*
- Kate Blake** (223) *Wine*



## Online Speaker Events

We're all missing our monthly members' meetings so we're looking to start bringing you a regular online speaker event in the near future.

Our first event was a talk by the Lothian 4x4 Response organisation on 26th November, attended by 20 members. Volunteer Jonathan Hutchinson also included some winter driving tips.

We're now arranging a time to bring you a talk on the new Heritage Project at Almondell Country Park so watch out for news about future events.

## Christmas Cards

The beautiful Christmas cards you'll receive this year have been made by the 50+ *Craft for Enjoyment* group.



Huge thanks to the group for this fantastic festive effort (so many cards to make for everyone!) which all of our members get to enjoy.



## Friends Remembered

### Kate Mitchell

Kate Mitchell passed away in October. She was a popular member of the Sing & Swing, Weekenders, Mahjong, Canasta and Bowling groups and shared many hours of fun and laughter with her fellow members and friends.

Covid restrictions meant only two Network representatives could attend her funeral. However a large crowd of members gathered outside Brodie's in Bathgate to pay their respects.

In November a letter was received from Caesar & Howie, administrators of Kate's estate, advising of a bequest to the Network. We are deeply touched by this gesture and have been in touch with Kate's family to express our appreciation.

### Jessie Shand

We were also sad to hear of the recent death of Jessie Shand who lived in Armadale.

### Ann Marshall

Long standing member Ann Marshall, also passed away recently. Ann lived in Bathgate and had been a Network member since 1998. Her friends at the Bathgate Coffee Club, Move and Improve, NuYu, Rummikub and Twalkers groups will miss her.

*Member Carol Wilson shared these thoughts which we feel sum up so well how many of us feel about the 50+ Network and the people we meet through it who help us along the way in one way or another.*

"After hearing of Kate Mitchell's passing, it has got me thinking about the whole 50+ experience. I got to know Kate through the Sing and Swing group. I sat beside her every 2nd Wednesday. We chatted and laughed together and had a good time - but we didn't know each other personally".

"We met again at Weekenders meetings and events and I enjoyed her company and was always glad to see her. "

"I'm not her family or a close friend - but I've realised that I'm going to miss her in my life. When this is all over and the groups meet up again, how many others will be missing?"

"We may be a group of miscellaneous strangers who meet up once or twice a month - but we impact on each other's lives anyway."

We've heard that some members have been in hospital recently and would like to remind you to let the Hub know about any members you are aware of who are in hospital or ill at home so that we can send them a card.

## Lest We Forget

West Lothian's traditional Remembrance Sunday events were cancelled this year due to Covid-19 restrictions. The ongoing pandemic meant many annual ceremonies, services and parades didn't take place.

In Bathgate, Remembrance events were cancelled and there was no service, parade or wreath laying at the monument. Normally the event would see veterans parade through the streets of the town before attending a church service and gathering at the Royal British Legion.

So it was heart-warming to see the poppies appearing once again on Bathgate's pyramids. Highly visible from the M8, these annual poppies bloom on the grassy mounds at Pyramid Business Park thanks to Poppyscotland, Scottish Rugby and Linemark UK.





## Support for Recovery

*The Network has been overwhelmed at the amount of support that we have received from a range of different organisations, both local and national.*

*The upgrades to our Members' Hub which will help us to come back safely, the continued employment of our staff and the equipment and upgrades required for our new Activity Centre have all been made possible thanks to additional external funding.*

We are grateful for recent support from the **Communities Recovery Fund** for a fantastic grant of £7,354. This will support the purchase of a reception desk, office furniture, touch free wall-mounted hand sanitisers and cleaning materials for our Hub at Linbar House. It also includes funding for window coverings, wipeable seats and tables, hand sanitiser, utilities and maintenance for our new Activity Centre at George Place, as well as two hoovers, one for each location.

The Communities Recovery Fund is part of the £25m Third Sector Community & Recovery Programme announced by the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020. It aims to support charities, community groups, social enterprises and voluntary organisations in supporting people and communities through the shift from lockdown to

recovery and tackle the challenges presented by COVID-19.

A further grant of £3,040 from the **National Emergencies Trust's Response, Recovery & Resilience Fund** also supports equipment to make our space safe post-Covid, including desk dividers and the new automatic door for the Hub.

We're grateful also for the local support of **West Lothian Voluntary Sector Gateway** (WLVSG) who recently awarded £500 to the Network for touch free wall-mounted hand sanitisers and a fogging machine for our new Activity Centre. An additional fogging machine + 25l disinfectant will be covered by the £400 kindly donated by the **Marsh Christian Trust** with a further £500 from **Tesco** and £100 from **Bellway Homes** for perspex screens and hand sanitiser stations for the Hub.

For the increased security of our staff and members visiting the Hub, **Linlithgow Roundtable** made a generous donation of £150 for CCTV and monitoring equipment.

**Connecting Scotland**, a Scottish Government programme set up in response to Coronavirus, supplied 2 ipads, 3 Chromebooks and 5 portable mobile wifi hotspots to help isolated members without access to technology or wifi to connect with others.

**Foundation Scotland's Gillian Charlotte Campbell Fund**

awarded the Network £4,000 to help support the employment of our development officer, which, in addition to a grant of £1,362 awarded by **WLVSG** in the summer, also helps cover our stationery, printing and postage costs. A grant of £5,000 from the **Foundation Scotland Local Solutions** fund makes a contribution towards Hub Co-ordinator salaries, rent and utilities at the Hub.

Foundation Scotland supports grassroots provision, where locally based and managed services can tailor their services to the communities that they know best and make a real difference to the lives of people they support. The Local Solutions programme specifically focuses on locally based organisations that provide locally relevant solutions to preventing some of the core disadvantages faced by Scotland's communities, such as the issue of loneliness and isolation affecting by older people.

Finally, the **Co-op Community Fund Whitburn** have nominated West Lothian 50+ Network as their chosen charity for the twelve months Nov 2020 - Oct 2021. This means that every time Co-op members buy selected Co-op branded products and services, 2p for every pound spent goes to the member and the same goes to support the selected local cause.

***A big thank you to all that continue to support the West Lothian 50+ Network.***



## Fire Safety for the Over 60s

*New statistics reveal that over the last five years 61 per cent of all accidental dwelling fire fatalities were people aged 60 and over.*

And more than a third of accidental dwelling fire casualties (38 per cent) were also people aged 60 and over. Although the risk of fire and fire injury increases as you get older there are simple measures that can be taken to keep safe.

Here is some advice *from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service* to help ensure older people are safe from fire in their home:

**Fit and maintain working smoke alarms** - you should have one on each level of your home in hallways, plus one smoke alarm in every living room. Consider fitting additional smoke alarms in bedrooms, particularly where persons are bedridden or otherwise vulnerable from fire due to ill health or disability. You should fit at least one heat alarm in every kitchen in your home. The best place for a smoke or heat alarm is on the ceiling. Try and keep them 30cm (12 inches) away from any walls, lights, doors, heating or air-conditioning vents.

**All alarms should be ceiling mounted and interlinked.**

**Test alarms weekly.** A working smoke or heat alarm can give you valuable time to get out, stay out and dial 999.

**Do not remove batteries.** If your smoke alarm keeps going off accidentally while you are cooking, do not remove the batteries. Instead move the alarm or change it for one with a silencer button. Heat alarms are ideal for the kitchen.

**Stay safe in the kitchen.** This is the area where the majority of house fires start, so never leave cooking unattended. If you need to leave the kitchen, turn electrical appliances off and take pans off the heat. Make sure you have at least one heat alarm in every kitchen.

**In the event of a fire 'Get out, stay out and call 999!'** Do not delay for valuables, do not investigate or try to tackle the fire. Use a mobile, a neighbour's phone or a phone box to call 999. If someone needs to be rescued, wait safely outside for the firefighters who have the equipment and training to do it. Never go back in.

**Do not overload plug sockets.** One plug per socket is the rule, take care not to let leads trail over cookers or touch water.

**Get 'key clever'.** Keep keys for windows and doors in an accessible place where everyone can find them so you can get out quickly in a fire.

**Plan your escape route.** Make sure you and your family know the quickest way out in the event of fire. Consider an alternative route in case your usual one is blocked.

**Keep candles in secure holders,** on a surface that does not burn, and away from any materials that could burn, such as curtains.

**Make sure that electric blankets are turned off** and stored flat (not rolled up) when not in use. Never use them with a hot water bottle. Statistics show that fires caused by electrical appliances and electric blankets have the highest rate of injury, with 440 injuries for every 1,000 fires.

**To arrange a home fire safety visit which is FREE for people aged 60+ :**

**Call 0800 0731 999**

**Text 'FIRE' to 80800**

**Call your local fire station**

## New Legislation

The Scottish Government is introducing new standards for fire and smoke alarms in all homes from February 2021.\*

From this date, every home must have:

- a smoke alarm in the living room and in circulation spaces such as hallways and landings
- a heat alarm in every kitchen
- all alarms ceiling mounted and interlinked
- a carbon monoxide alarm where there are fixed combustion appliances such as boilers and wood burners

The new rules mean the standard which currently applies to private rented property and new-builds is being extended to all homes in Scotland.

\*May be delayed for 12 months due to Covid 19.



## Members' Gardens

*Just before lockdown there had been talk of starting a new gardening group.*

We've a few keen gardeners in the 50+ Network, and for these members at least 2020 has given us plenty of time to enjoy our outside spaces.

Some of them have been sharing this year's garden projects, amongst them Brian Hopkirk who has constructed, to his own design, a fantastic outdoor seating area made entirely of locally sourced wooden pallets (below). Brian has also utilised radiators and washing machine drums as planters. His advice to others – think outside the box. His next project will be a swimming pool - once he gets enough Asda bags for life to line it!

Graham and Loretta Hardacre also have a lovely garden and Graham has



been busy this year creating new seating and planters. (above)

Lesley and Nat Martin have a very productive fruit and veg garden, enabling Lesley to make jams, chutneys, and to supply friends and neighbours with fresh produce. There's even enough surplus

to supply one of the farm shops in the Clyde Valley!

Joe and Cilla Murphy spend many happy hours tending their lovely garden and Sheila Doyle is very proud of her lovely daisies (below).



As we move towards restarting our activities, a gardening group where we can meet outdoors may well be a welcome addition.



## Four easy ways to support the Network

### Co-op Membership

The Co-op Community Fund Whitburn\* has nominated the Network as their chosen charity for 12 months, Nov 2020 - Oct 2021.

Co-op members (you can join for £1) are issued with a card and every time you buy selected products, the Network will get 2p for every £1 spent.

You can join online or in a Co-op store (but not in Scotmid), then select WL50+Network and cause 49585. You also get rewards for being a Co-op member.

\*Food Whitburn, Funeralcare Whitburn and Funeralcare Bathgate.



### Amazon Smile

Are you an online shopper? Do you use Amazon more than ever nowadays? Remember, always start at [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk) and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the net purchase price (excluding VAT, returns and shipping fees) to the eligible charitable organisation of your choice (West Lothian 50+ Network).

## Gotta Laugh or I'd Cry!

No Nativity this year because the Three Wise Men face a travel ban.

The Shepherds have been furloughed.

The Innkeeper has shut under Level 4 regulations and had a slump in bookings.

Santa won't be working as he would be breaking the Rule of 6 with Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Donner and Blitzen.

As for Rudolph, with that red nose, he should be isolating and taking a test!



### Ecclesiastical

Members can help the Network to win £1,000 by nominating our charity through the Ecclesiastical website. Enter our charity number SC024257 on their website:

[www.movementforgood.com/12days/](https://www.movementforgood.com/12days/)

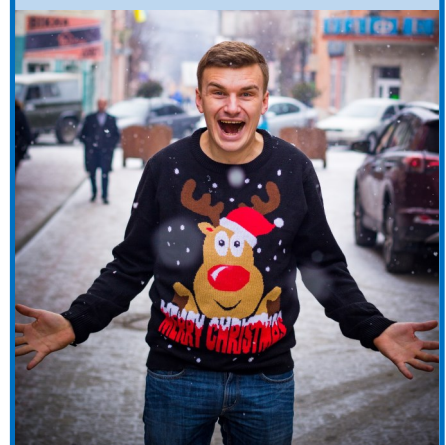
then select Community, give a few details and press nominate – and that's all there is to it.



### Easyfundraising

You can still use Easyfundraising every time you shop online to raise funds for West Lothian 50+ Network when buying online.

Go to [www.easyfundraising.co.uk](https://www.easyfundraising.co.uk) or give the Hub a call for help.



## Stay positive everyone!



## Membership Fees for 2021

*Some members have been asking about membership fees for next year.*

The committee has discussed the fairest way to deal with membership fees for next year, given that the Network has been unable to provide our normal activities and events in 2020.

Under consideration was the fact that Covid restrictions have meant we have been unable to attract new members this year, resulting in a substantial loss of membership fees.

We've also been unable to raise funds in our usual way, through raffles and fundraisers such as our Coffee Morning and Craft Fair, or our annual Thrift Shop. This can impact on our ability to fundraise from third parties who normally like to see match funding generated by the organisation itself.

The decision has been taken to continue everyone's 2020 membership until the end of March 2021. This means that your current membership card will be valid until then. Going forward, our membership year will start on 1 April and end on 31st March.

We've also decided to halve the membership fee for 2021, so you'll be able to re-join next year for just £10.

## New online art group

*In the run up to Christmas, a number of our members are participating in weekly online art group sessions.*

The RiverLife Project *Nature Through Your Window* is funded by the Forth Rivers Trust and delivered by community artist Annie Lord.

The drawing challenge sessions take place over Zoom and each session aims to teach or hone different artistic skills.

We can't wait to hear how our members enjoy this.

Thank you to Forth Rivers Trust for providing this opportunity.



## Website Update

Work is well underway to rebuild our website, which had to been taken down recently due to infection by a virus ! We'll keep you posted when it's back up and running.

## Festive Knit

### Christmas Tree Garland

*Tree Motif in Garter stitch*

My trees were DK yarn on 3.25 mm needles.



Cast on 21 stitches (sts).

1st to 4th rows: Knit.

5th and 6th rows: Cast off 2 sts. Knit to end of row.

7th row: Cast off 1 st. Knit to end of row.

Repeat (rep) last row until 11 sts remain (rem) on needle.

Next 2 rows: Cast on 3 sts. Knit to end of row.

Next 2 rows: Knit.

Next row: Cast off 1 st. Knit to end of row.

Rep last row until 7 sts rem on needle.

Next 2 rows: Cast on 2 sts. Knit to end of row.

Knit 1 row.

Next row: Cast off 1 st. Knit to end of row.

Rep last row until 3 sts rem on needle.

Next row: Knit 3 stitches together (K3tog). Break yarn, leaving a long enough tail to bind off and tie to make a hoop.

### *Hanging Chain*

With crochet hook or your finger, crochet a chain to desired length and hang on the trees.

**Supplied by a volunteer at St Columba's Hospice**



## Christmas Bags for Everyone

Santa has had a few extra helpers this year. Led by Elizabeth Florence and Kath Fraser, the Committee have been working away behind the scenes to magic up some Christmas cheer for our members to compensate for the absence of our usual Network festivities. Elizabeth and Kath, with help from the Craft group, have brought together a lovely bundle of festive delights for you all in the thoughtful Christmas bags from West Lothian 50+ Network.

Goodies, toiletries and a local-themed present are some of the surprise gifts. A big thank you to those companies who have donated something to include in the bags.

Age Scotland, Asda (Livingston), Generation Arts, Morrisons in Bathgate and Livingston, Glenmorangie, Glen Turner and Bathgate Community Council have all made a contribution. The bags are also supported by a generous Pensioners Christmas Treats Grant from West Lothian Council, which normally helps to fund our Christmas party.

It may be a different Christmas season this year, but our best wishes for you all remain the same.

A very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## The West Lothian 50+ Network is a group of active over fifties run by members for members

We facilitate a wide range of physical, social, educational and cultural activities for our members, with the aim of keeping active in mind and body whilst combating social isolation. Under normal circumstances we meet monthly with an interesting speaker, offer almost 50 special interest groups and run day trips, holidays, concerts, dinners and other events.

### Limitation of Liability

The West Lothian 50+ Network does not assess its members' fitness for participation in any of its various activities. The decision about your fitness to undertake any activity lies within yourself, together with any medical advice you wish to take. It is your own responsibility to ensure your personal safety and that of your belongings.

## Contact West Lothian 50+ Network

Unit 48 G Linbar House

Phone: 01506 635510

North Bridge Street

Email: [hub@westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk](mailto:hub@westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk)

Bathgate

Facebook: [WestLothian50PlusNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/WestLothian50PlusNetwork)

EH48 4PP

Website: [www.westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk](http://www.westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk)