

Network News

June 2021



Network Activities Start to Return

It's good to see our bowlers back out on the green. They are one of the first groups to meet up again, amongst others that can meet outdoors or in a safe environment.

In addition to the Bowling group, five of our walking groups are back out again—the Happy Wanderers, the Dawdlers, the Two Left Feet, Walky Talky and the Twalkies. Another outdoor group, the Cycling group, has also restarted and is looking for new members.

The two Coffee Clubs in Bathgate and Livingston have also restarted, both in new venues (see page 7). The Weekenders are currently consulting with their members about how comfortable they are to restart.

Meanwhile the Network's Committee held a round-table meeting in person for the first time since the start of the pandemic, and Sunday 27th June saw the return of our regular Sunday coach trips.

Book and Blether, Tai Chi, French, French Café, Italian, Craft for Enjoyment, Zumba and Ukulele are all continuing to meet for the time being on Zoom.



The Bowling group, which meets on Thursday mornings, enjoyed their first "post Covid" meeting at Glenmavis Bowling Club on 10th June.

We're told the photo shows members keeping a social distance by measuring with arms - not indicating how close they came to the jack!

The group were at a slight disadvantage when the solar eclipse swept over (this week's excuse) but fun and banter was enjoyed by everyone.

Welcome!

A warm 50+ welcome to all the new members who have joined the Network since the start of the year.

To date (mid June 2021) 25 new members have taken out a Network membership.

With the membership fee currently only £10 for the year, if you have friends or family who are thinking about joining, remind them that there has never been a better time to join.



Hub Now Open

Many of you will know that our Members' Hub in Bathgate's Linbar House opened for business again on 26th April.

We have brought all our staff back out of furlough and normal opening hours have been reinstated (Monday to Friday, 10am - 2pm).

It all looks very different now of course, with its clean lines, wipeable surfaces and plastic screens.

You'll be asked to wear a mask when you enter, and to sanitise your hands. Sadly we can't yet serve you a coffee and unfortunately for now the toilet is for staff use only.

But we hope nevertheless to give you a warm welcome when you come in to see us.



100 Years Young!

Congratulations to Network member Jean Turpie!

To help her celebrate her 100th birthday, the Network delivered a bouquet of flowers, a bottle of sherry and a card hand-crafted by a member of our craft group to Jean's care home. They were handed in three days before so that they could be held in quarantine in time for the big day on 9th June.

A small celebration was organised by Jean's niece and the care home.

Convenor's Foreword

It's so good to see things starting to open up once more!

After a long year the Committee was finally able to meet again in person this month, and it's heart warming to see our groups getting underway once more as they are able.

A big thank you to everyone who has renewed their membership this year. Thank you for staying with us whilst our activities were restricted during lockdowns, and for putting your faith in the Network as we re-start our activities.

I'd like to thank all those members who joined the meeting at the end of May to lend their support to the Committee to take the organisation forward with a new Constitution. Details as to why this is important for the Network are on page 8 but, needless to say, we believe this will put the Network on a strong footing for going forward into the future.

I'm delighted that we have been able to strengthen our Committee by welcoming on board Heather Waddell, Vanda Collins and Mary Ferrie. All bring a great deal of invaluable experience to the table.

Wishing you all, your friends and families, a great summer,

Anne Webster,
Convenor



Our Members' Hub at Linbar House

Sunday Coach Trips are Back!

We've all missed getting out and about and so we decided to test the water by offering our first post-Covid Sunday coach trip at the end of June.

It was agreed to use third party provider Tartan Travel for our first trips to help ensure that all Covid safe procedures had been put into place.

The price was higher than we've been used to – £25 for our first outing to St Andrew's and Anstruther - but this is due, in part, to the provider being unable to fill a coach due to current restrictions.

We initially signed up for a smaller coach with a maximum of 25 seats, but following enthusiastic take-up by members we quickly exchanged this for the larger, 57 seater coach, with a current Covid-safe capacity of 31 passengers.

Your response has encouraged us to plan day trips for the next three months over the summer, when we'll be offering outings to Berwick on Tweed (July), Lindisfarne & Dunbar (August) and Kelburn Castle and Largs (September).



Day Trip to St Andrew's and Anstruther

It was a fine morning in Bathgate as we set off for our first post-Covid coach trip, leaving the old railway station at 9.30 and arriving in St Andrew's at 11.00.

The sun stayed with us all day, and members enjoyed a variety of activities, from a visit to the golf museum, a paddle in the sea, a stroll around the shops and historic monuments and a visit to local hostelries.

One group enjoyed a walk along the Lade Braes, a popular public footpath following the route of an old mill lade with a history stretching back to the middle ages.

The last two hours of the day were spent at Anstruther, a short distance along the coast, where most enjoyed one of the town's

celebrated fish suppers.

The continuing warm weather persuaded many to end the day with an ice cream whilst strolling along the port admiring the boats.

Upcoming Sunday Coach Trips

25 July Berwick-upon-Tweed

29 Aug Lindisfarne & Dunbar

26 Sept Kelburn & Largs

All trips are with Tartan Travel and cost £25 per person.

Full details available at the Hub.

Until further notice, the number on each coach will be limited to 31.

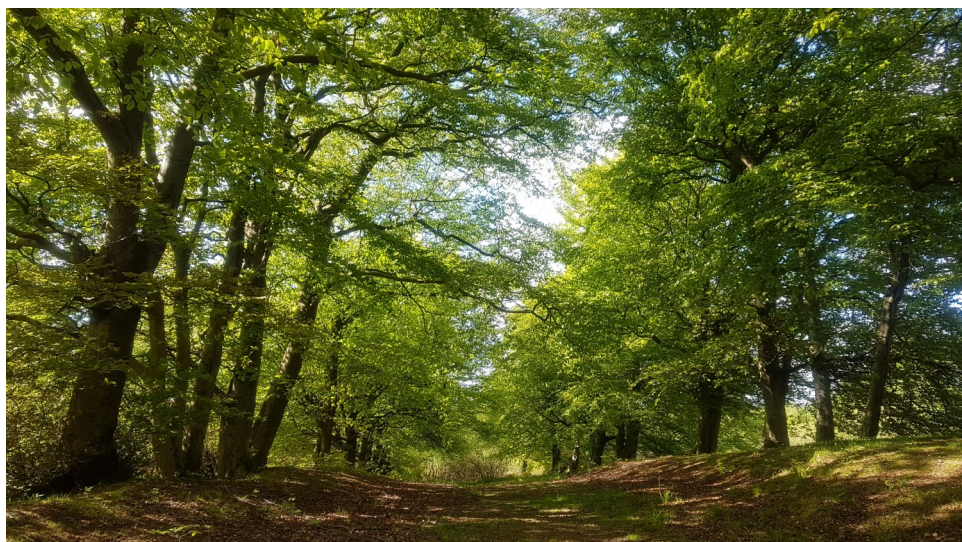
Volunteers' Week

The first week in June was Volunteers' Week, a time when we recognise and thank all volunteers for the hard work and energy they bring to the West Lothian 50 Plus Network, and to organisations everywhere.

We know that as well as leading groups for the Network, many of our members also volunteer in a myriad of other ways: for the Food Train, Boomerang, Citizens Advice, in cancer charities, churches, canal societies, country parks and litter picking, to name just a few.

So thank you all so much, for your time, your energy and your amazing contributions that makes volunteering such an incredibly valuable and essential element to charities and organisations everywhere.

On 4 June, West Lothian Volunteer Network held a virtual celebration for local volunteers. We asked some of our members what volunteering means to them. French Café leader Lorna Kerwin explained how her involvement in Bathgate's Twinning Association with Cran-Gevrier in France had helped her make many new friends and develop a love of all things French.



West Lothian's Trees and Woodlands

Thanks go to West Lothian Council's Forestry Officer Jane Begg who, on 27th May, took members who tuned in through the Zoom platform, on a virtual Spring walk in the woods.

Following this, and the Network's tree planting activities at Beecraigs at the end of 2019, the Parks & Woodland Team at West Lothian Council has asked if any members would be interested in forming an informal group (along with others) to undertake a number of volunteer tasks and also to be a sounding board on tree and woodland matters.

A more formal group may be set up later, to advise on the Tree and Woodland part of the council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan but it's also really helpful to hear from, and exchange information with, local folk who live in West Lothian and who enjoy walking in some of the woods and greenways.

Over the summer there a number of tasks to help maintain young trees and also to help to start re-planting the woods at Almondell where extensive felling has recently taken place.

A long-term Forest Plan is being prepared for the woods managed by the council around Livingston. As part of this, it is hoped that there will be some "Walk and Talk" events to look at what is planned and to get people's thoughts and ideas before the plans are finalised.

For information about what some people are doing in other parts of the country please see information from the Tree Council: [Become a Tree Warden - Tree Council Volunteer Tree Wardens](#).

Locally, Woodland Trust Scotland also has volunteers helping in their Livingston Woods and maybe some joint activities could be arranged?

Contact the Hub if you are interested in getting involved



Committee Update

Three members of the Committee stood down at our AGM this year. Meanwhile, two well-kent faces have returned to lend their expertise.

Elizabeth Florence, Sheila Linscer and Lesley Martin, who have served 2, 4 and 7 years respectively, stepped down from the Network's committee in May.

Hazel Matthews, who served on the committee for a year, recently moved out of West Lothian and also stepped down at that time, whilst Jim Dixon retired at the beginning of 2021.

We thank them all for their valuable contributions.

To help fill the gap, we're pleased to welcome back Vanda Collins and Mary Ferrie.

Following the recent AGM, both Mary and Vanda expressed their willingness to be involved with the committee again. We're delighted to have them back with all the experience they bring with them.

We're pleased to report that Heather Waddell has also agreed to join the Committee. Many of you will know Heather from her walking group, the Happy Wanderers, and from the excellent day trips and holidays she has been involved in organising for the Network.

Welcome on board to all our new committee members!



Mary Ferrie



Vanda Collins



Heather Waddell

Activity Centre Update

In our April newsletter we had to tell you the disappointing news that the unit in George Place, Bathgate that we had secured for our Activity Centre was in doubt.

Because of the need to keep the unit on the rental open market, it had become subject to a planning application from a fast food outlet. Planning permission has, in fact, now been approved for that activity.

This led the committee to pursue another option in the town.

However, at the time of going to press, we are unfortunately still not in a position to give you good news.

As things stand, we have still not been served notice on the George Place premises, but we have also not yet had the go-ahead from West Lothian Council's environmental health officer to use the facility for our groups.

And, just as we were preparing to sign a lease on our second option, we have now also hit a stumbling block with moving forward in that direction.

Please bear with us while we try to resolve these issues.

Walking Groups

Returning

Some of the Network's walking groups have started up again, with the Happy Wanderers, the Dawdlers, Walky Talky, the Twalkies and the Two Left Feet first off the mark.

We've been following the guidance from organised walking groups such as the Ramblers, and from the 12th March it has been possible to begin a gradual return of organised groups.

Group walks require group registers, risk assessments and social distancing. Booking systems are also required.

Walk leaders will decide when the time is right for them to return, with some wanting to wait until everyone has had their second vaccination.

Support is in place from the Hub should walk leaders require it.



The Dawdlers at Linlithgow Loch

Mens' Breakfast Group

The Men's Group have negotiated space in Leonardos café in Bathgate to start a new Breakfast Group.

A space for up to 24 places is available between 10am and 12 noon on Tuesday mornings.

This is an opportunity for men in the

Network to keep in contact with friends and meet new people.



Italian for Beginners

A new Italian class for beginners has got underway. It currently takes place on Thursdays over Zoom.

The new beginner group currently meets at 3pm and is led by John Walker.

Please contact the Hub if you are interested in signing up for this class.

New Local History Group

Over 20 members expressed an interest in the proposed new Local History group, to be led by West Lothian's former local history librarian, Sybil Cavanagh.

It has been agreed that, rather than start the meetings on Zoom, the group would wait until after the Summer, when it is hoped they will be able to meet in person.

Join Our Cycling Group!

Cycling is an ideal activity for members looking to meet up outside in the fresh air and enjoy some exercise.

The cycling group meet at West Lothian Bike Library in south Livingston on Tuesdays and is looking for new members.

If anyone is interested, group leader John Matthews is asking for people to put their names forward before he restarts the group in September.

Ideally you should take your own bike however there are some bikes available for those who don't have one.

Initially the group will take short tours on dedicated cycle tracks. All in all, the sessions will last about an hour.

If you would like to join, please contact the Hub or group leader John by email at johndmatthews1954@gmail.com



Coffee Clubs Meet Again

It was smiles all round as our two Coffee Clubs met up in person again.

Both coffee clubs have had a change in venue. The Bathgate club now meets in Leonardo's on the precinct, and the Livingston group meets in the Chain Runner in Livingston town centre.

A big slice of cake was the order of the day at the first post-Covid meeting of the Bathgate group to celebrate the group's return and Sheila's birthday.

The new venue was met with approval as it is one of Bathgate's larger establishments with plenty of room for everyone and very helpful staff.

Moves are afoot to get a third Coffee Club started in Uphall.



New Gardening Group

The new gardening group had its first meeting on Zoom on 15th June.

Since then, the group have agreed to meet in person, with 13 members joining leader John Fleming at Polkemmet Country Park on 29th June. The group plans to meet every second Tuesday and initially will visit gardens, garden centres and nurseries. Some meetings may also be hosted in group members' gardens.

The group's next visit on 13th July will be to Dobbies Garden Centre in Livingston..



A New Constitution for the Network

A virtual Network meeting was held on Zoom on 29th May to vote on the proposed change to our Constitution.

We had been advised by several external bodies, including lawyers and funders, that our current Constitution as an Unincorporated Charity (SCO) was no longer fit for purpose. The Committee as a board of Trustees were of the opinion that the Network needed to change to a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Association (SCIO) and we sought a resolution of our members to allow us to change our Constitution.

In our current entity as an SCO, the trustees must personally undertake transactions. In the proposed new legal entity, the Scottish Charitable Incorporated Association ("SCIO") may enter into the same type of transactions as a natural person, such as entering into contracts, employing staff, incurring debts, owning property, suing and being sued.

The transactions of the SCIO are undertaken by it directly, rather than by its trustees on its behalf, protecting the trustees from incurring personal liability.

Ten percent of the membership needed to approve the resolution: 41 paid up members attended the meeting and voted Yes. We also had 2 votes by proxy. Seven members had also indicated by email that, although unable to attend, they would vote in favour.

The Committee are receiving legal advice from MacRoberts solicitors and financial support for the cost of that advice, to facilitate the transition. The process as a whole is likely to take 4 months and is overseen by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

Reasons for Changing the Constitution

To secure the future of the Network - our current constitution is limiting the Networks opportunities.

To allow the Network to transact business as a body, protecting both Trustees and members. Currently any contract or lease is taken out by the Trustees as individuals. This potentially puts Trustees and members at risk. Also, under our current constitution we could not have a credit card. The Covid pandemic has reinforced the need for this, with more purchases being made online, where bank transfers are rarely an option, as well as the need for the protection that credit card purchases are afforded. This is particularly relevant in an uncertain world where holidays and trips are being booked and deposits paid.

To satisfy funders - Funders prefer and have asked for us to become incorporated. Some funders are not able to support us because their rules do not allow them to fund a non-incorporated Charity.

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting took place on 15 May 2021 at 11am.

We had hoped that restrictions would be sufficiently lifted by then to hold the AGM at our usual May members' meeting. However given the situation at the time, the meeting was held online.

It is disappointing that this excluded those who are not online, but we could find no other way to conduct this essential business for our organisation.

All members will receive the minutes of the AGM in due course and a copy of the Network's accounts to 31st March 2020 will be made available to all members on request

**ANNUAL
GENERAL
MEETING**

Bowls Wanted

Do you have bowls that you no longer need? Could you help out a new bowler? We are often asked if we have any bowls available for members that are keen to start or try out bowling. If you have bowls that you no longer need and are happy to donate them or sell them on, please get in touch with the Hub.



Keeping You Safe

The Network was delighted to be given the opportunity to send our staff on a free one-day Emergency First Aid at Work course in May.

Seen in action are Suzanne Greig (Hub Co-ordinator) and Fiona Cochrane (Change Manager) going through their paces in CPR and bandage technique.

We are grateful to **Enterprising Bathgate** for funding the course, which was delivered locally by Alba Care.

Thanks go also to Steven Murray at **TTC Medical** who has donated a first aid box for the Hub.



Funding Update

Excellent news from our fundraiser Laura Kearny who has been very busy on our behalf in recent weeks.

Huge thanks to three funders who notified us in June that they are co-funding Hub Co-ordinator salaries:

They are the **Baillie Gifford Foundation** who have awarded £15,000 (£5,000 a year for 3 years); the **Albert Hunt Trust** who awarded £2,000; and the **Swinton Paterson Trust** who also awarded £2,000 .

Thanks also to **Arnold Clark Community Fund** for their recent award of £1,000 to the Network towards the running costs of the Activity Centre.

We're delighted that when we are settled into our new activity centre, we will have a super new kitchen donated by **Howdens Bathgate**.

Thank you also to **The East Regional Committee of Scotmid** for the £500 community grant that they have awarded us to help with supporting our members through the new Activity Centre. This funding will pay for a new Beans to Cup coffee machine and the beans, so that members can enjoy a nice cuppa at no cost while attending groups, meeting with staff or other members when restrictions allow. We greatly appreciate their support.

And thanks to the **Prudential** who have awarded us £1,800. It includes £408 for woodworking tools, £200 for new Scrabble boards, and £1,000 for a branded gazebo for outdoor events.

We are grateful to **The Original Factory Shop Bathgate** who have nominated the Network as their charity of the year. For every carrier bag they sell, and for every swipe of a TOFS card, the Network will receive a contribution. Thank you to everyone who nominated West Lothian 50+ Network.

A reminder that West Lothian 50+ Network is one of the charities selected for support by **Co-op Whitburn** until October 2021, so there are still a few months to go to raise funds and awareness of the Network. If you are a Co-op member, please log into your account and choose West Lothian 50+ Network as your charity. When a Co-op member buys selected Co-op branded products and services, 1p from every pound they spend supports local causes through the Local Community Fund. The more Co-op members that select West Lothian 50+ Network as their cause, and spend with Co-op, the more funding West Lothian 50+ Network receives. You can also choose to donate your membership reward 2p per £1 spent to your chosen charity. If you are not already a member, it only costs £1 to join and can be done in any Co-op store or online. You will then receive bonuses and discounts for being a member. Shopping in any Co-op counts!

Thank you to everyone who has chosen West Lothian 50+ so far. We have raised £270.40 to date.

<https://membership.coop.co.uk/>

THANK YOU
to all of our sponsors!

Taking Care of Your Mental Health

For more than a year now, the Covid pandemic has taken a severe toll on older people's mental health. Lockdown and shielding, during a health emergency in which almost 9,000 over 65s in Scotland lost their lives, has resulted in unprecedented levels of anxiety, depression and loneliness.

Although lockdown is easing, the psychological consequences of Covid are going to be with us for a very long time. Many older people are not ready - or emotionally resilient enough - to embrace pre-pandemic life yet.

Research published by Age UK last October examined the psychological impact on older people of living with prolonged stress, uncertainty, isolation and loneliness during the first lockdown. Respondents described a loss of confidence, fear, depression, a loss of hope and no longer derived pleasure from the things in life they previously enjoyed.

A number of family members of older people who took part in the research reported an alarming cognitive decline in their loved ones during the first lockdown, witnessing evidence of increased confusion and forgetfulness. One in five older people, with no diagnosis of dementia, acknowledged they were finding it more difficult to remember things.

We know that the first lockdown in March 2020 brought an abrupt end to exercise groups, fitness classes, social and community events. For many older people this meant they couldn't see their friends or family, stopped doing any physical exercises,

had no routine and felt cut off from their communities and support networks.

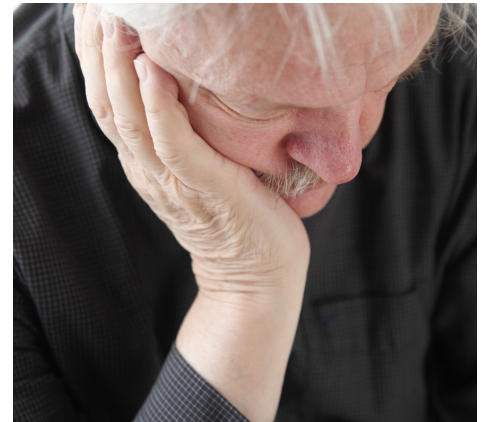
This led to rising numbers of older people experiencing mental health issues for the first time. Anxiety - about catching Covid, the wellbeing and safety of family and the future - spiralled. Low mood and depression rose, as older people told Age UK they felt unmotivated, 'like a prisoner in my own home' and spoke of diminished quality of life. And of course many older people were bereaved at a time they couldn't grieve with family and friends.

A knock-on effect of low mood and depression was a growth in reports of self-neglect - abandoning personal hygiene, not caring about appearance, increased alcohol intake, poor diet, not sleeping and a loss of motivation.

Loneliness, a public health epidemic before Covid, reached record levels. A study found that 157,000 over 65s in Scotland expected to feel lonely last Christmas, a reflection on how isolated so many older people had become.

Now, almost six months on after a four-month winter lockdown, it is highly likely that the hidden problem of chronic loneliness among older people is worse than ever.

The extent of loneliness is hard to measure but research carried out last year by Professor Anne Whittaker at the University of Stirling for the Chief Scientist Office found that 56% of over 60s said



social distancing made them feel lonelier and those reported higher levels of loneliness also had poorer overall wellbeing. Neither of these issues are likely to be resolved any time soon.

Admitting they are experiencing poor mental health is quite alien to some older people. Although younger people have largely overcome the stigma of living with mental health issues, the older 'stiff upper lip' generations struggle to talk about their mental health with loved ones or seek help from doctors.

But mental health issues can affect anyone of any age. The impact of the pandemic on older people will have triggered mental health conditions and exacerbated existing conditions in many. There will be no sudden bounce back just because the shops and pubs are open again.

For older people who are living with mental health issues or who recognise that their mental health isn't as robust as it was, Age Scotland provides guides to support mental health and wellbeing in later life.

Source : Age Scotland

Tips from the *Guide to Keeping Well* to help older people look after their mental health:

Talk to people – don't be afraid to share how you're feeling with family, friends or your GP. They can offer support and advice. There's some truth in the saying, a problem shared is a problem halved. The Age Scotland helpline is available to offer advice, information and friendship on 0800 12 44 222.

Get out and about – the theme of this year's Mental Health Awareness Week is nature. Getting outside for a walk, noticing the colours and seasonal changes, listening to the birds and enjoying the fresh air are all beneficial for physical and mental health.

Do something you enjoy – finding pleasure in ordinary activities can help lift your mood. Listening to music, reading, planting seeds or picking up the phone to call a friend can give you a boost.

Relax – it's important to find peace in your day, whether it's by sitting in your garden, going for a walk somewhere quiet or doing some slow yoga stretches and gentle breathing to help relax your mind and body.

Rest – mental health worries can rob you of a good night's sleep. Speak to your GP if you're consistently having trouble sleeping. You can also start a pre-bed routine to improve your chances of falling – and staying – asleep. Turn off the TV, have a milky drink (not coffee!) and think of things you're grateful for to relax your mind before you lie down.



Bake Sale Raises Funds for Ageing Adults

Following the Network's partnership with Home Instead Livingston at Christmas, we were delighted to be able to offer this local care provider our support for their recent bake sale.

Our Activity Centre in George Place in central Bathgate provided the perfect location for the Home Instead team to set up their one day only *Bring Joy Bake Sale*.

Held on Saturday 26th June, it was a fine day for their team to be out

talking to people about what *Home Instead* do.

They were also able to pass on information to help promote the West Lothian 50 + Network.

Home Instead are delighted to have raised a total of £495.44 from cake sales, raffles/competitions and digital donations through their associated *Just Giving* page.

They were blown away by the support they received in the town, which will directly fund community groups, projects and activities for ageing adults in West Lothian.

Every Child Deserves to Fit In

Most children are excited to start the new school year in their new uniform but sadly this just isn't the case for all children.

With child poverty on the rise, it means children don't have all the necessary uniform or equipment they need for school and this can lead to children feeling excluded from fully participating at school, reduces their self-esteem and has a long-term effect on their life chances.

The School Bank aims to help EVERY child in West Lothian to fit in, feel confident and able to focus on their education.

You can help by donating brand new items via The School Bank such as:

- ◆ a pack of white polo shirts so they feel confident on their first day at school
- ◆ a pair of joggers/zipper so they can take part in outdoor PE like their friends
- ◆ a pencil case which they are excited to show their friends and which helps to re-ignite their joy of learning
- ◆ a water bottle so they can stay hydrated and focus on their education

Donations can be made via the Hub.

Coin Jar Charity

It's a tradition that, each year at our AGM, members vote for a local charity to support during the year by donations to our Coin Jar in the Hub.

At our AGM this year, members voted for **The School Bank** to be our chosen coin jar charity for 2021/2022.

Where Are Our Members?

Whilst the majority of our members stay in Bathgate, the Network is nonetheless a county-wide organisation.

Indeed the two main criteria for membership is that you must be aged over 50 and live in West Lothian.

The make-up of our members, based on where they live, is currently as follows:

- Bathgate 46.49%
- Livingston 15.42%
- Armadale 7.94%
- Whitburn 7.48%
- Broxburn & Uphall 6.8%
- Linlithgow 2.04%
- Torphichen 2.95%
- West Calder 1.36%
- Mid & East Calder 1.36%

The balance is made up of very small numbers living in other towns and villages across West Lothian.

One of the aims of our development officer, Tracy Kerr, is to grow our membership by making connections and seeking new premises so that we can extend our activities to older people across a wider geographic area.



Singing is good for you!

A recent article in The Herald reported the findings of new research from the University of Helsinki which found that singing in a choir boosts the brain and creates a greater sense of togetherness in older people.

Psychologist and neuroscientist Emmi Pentikainen was quoted as saying: "It's possible that the people who have joined a choir later in life have thus found motivation to maintain their health by adhering to an active and healthy lifestyle".

The study included 106 choir singers and the findings suggested that "joining a choir could help fight age-related cognitive decline and chronic loneliness" - which affects around one in ten older people.

Those of us who are the Network Singers would certainly agree with the "togetherness" and social aspects of a choir. However due to the pandemic, we have not sung together for over a year and although we have missed our weekly practices, we have managed to stay in touch. Whilst being unable to meet in person, some choir members have stayed in touch through Zoom, telephone calls and WhatsApp, which has facilitated frequent long conversations together with the exchange of amusing stories and videos. Unfortunately, those without computers have not been able to join in but they do receive news updates from time to time and members phone their fellow choristers to keep in touch.

The Network Singers was established in

2009. It was intended for those of us who enjoy singing and who would also enjoy being with like-minded people in an informal choir.

Initially we did not intend performing to audiences as we were a bit nervous of our ability. However, with a bit of persuasion we held our first concert in 2010 in the Regal Theatre. Nerve wracking though it was we were quite proud of ourselves and our success.

Since then, we have gone from strength to strength under the musical direction of Yvonne Drummond. Her drive and enthusiasm have been fantastic. When she took over as Musical Director we only sang in unison and were quite adamant that we could not attempt parts.

However, that gradually changed, and Yvonne now has us singing in parts, foreign languages and even solo singing. We normally have a concert every 18 months or so and are joined by the Network Juniors, children from about 7 years old to 14 years old. The combination of the old and the young voices seems to work well.

As well as our main concert we have a carol concert every year which is quite a popular event. We sing in local residential homes, we take part in the Christmas event in Kirkton Park, Bathgate, we sing in the Bathgate Partnership Centre library as part of their "Make a Noise in the Library" week and we also sing to an invited audience on the night before the Bathgate Highland Games. We have built up a fairly varied repertoire.

Not only do we sing together but we also have social occasions, such as beetle drives, karaoke singing and meals out.

Before the pandemic we met every Thursday in the Answer Centre in Whitburn from 7 till 8.30pm. At the moment we are considering changing



our practice time from evening to afternoon as many of the choir are not keen on driving at night, especially during the winter months. We are aiming at about 2.30pm till 4 pm on Thursday afternoons. The venue may also change but that has to be confirmed. We car share where several of us are coming from the same area, so transport should not be a problem for new members.

We are always open to new members. There is no audition for the choir and potential new members are invited to come to one or two of our practices to see if they like what they hear and see. We particularly would like to have more male members in the choir. They add a certain depth of tone which is great. So, if you enjoy singing and would like to sing with others, do join us.

Although we have no idea of when we will be allowed to sing again, if you are interested in joining us, please apply via the Hub and your details will be passed to me to make telephone contact.

Remember! Singing is good for your health!

This article was submitted by Vanda Collins on behalf of the Network Singers.

New leaders for Sing and Swing

The long-standing leader of the Sing and Swing group, Jimmy Henderson, is stepping down.

Jimmy has been helped by Alison Millar to lead the singing and dance group for many years and their contribution has always been greatly appreciated.

Alma Thomas and Sandra Carr have very kindly agreed to take over leading the group.

Sing and Swing members will still see Jimmy and Alison, who will continue to attend the group when restrictions allow it to restart.

A wee note from Alison Millar

Dear Friends,

Jimmy and I are sorry to be giving up the Sing and Swing group, which Jimmy has been leading for fifteen years. It started in the Regal in Bathgate, and then we moved to the Partnership Centre as we had more room for people to join us.

Jimmy loved doing it; he was always trying out different music for dancing. It was harder to get singers.

It is a nice, friendly and informal group. We still hope to come along and enjoy it as someone else is taking it over.



The Sing and Swing group led by Jimmy Henderson (photo pre-Covid)



Hand Crafted Cards

Are you looking for a greetings card for a special occasion?

The Hub has a lovely range of well-priced cards for you to choose from.

All are lovingly hand crafted by members of our Craft group, who also supply the Network with Get Well cards to send to our members, as well as thank you cards which we use to express our gratitude to Network supporters.

Find a card for that special occasion whilst supporting Network funds.

Friends Remembered

Since our last newsletter we have sadly heard of the passing of members **Dick Saunders** and **Pam Whitelaw** who both died in April, and **Sheena Smith** who died in June. Our condolences to all their friends and families

Please let the Hub know about any members you are aware of who are in hospital or ill at home so that we can send a card with our well wishes.



The Big Knit

Age Scotland is calling on nimble-fingered knitters to whip out their wool and needles and create little woolly hats for The Big Knit.

The Big Knit, a joint campaign between innocent drinks and Age UK, is calling on budding milliners to get inventive and knit miniature woolly hats to adorn innocent smoothie bottles, which will be sold in stores nationwide.

For every smoothie sold, Age Scotland receives 25p, and that money helps them fight loneliness among older people.

How to join in?

1. **Choose a pattern.** Design your own hat or use one of Age Scotland's patterns. There are beginner, intermediate and advanced patterns so there is something for everyone! A selection of patterns can be found on Age Scotland's website or in the 50+ Network's Members' Hub.

2. **Knit Away.** Have a virtual knit and natter or take up a new family hobby together and learn how to knit with your grandchildren or partner.

3. **Bring your hats into the Hub.** We'll send them off to Age Scotland when we have collected a few.

4. **Tell Age Scotland your story.** Age Scotland would love to know your knitting stories and why you are taking part in the Big Knit. You can let them know by emailing bigknit@agescotland.org.uk



Sir Hopsalot

Knit Sir Hopsalot - Rabbit Hat by Juliet Bernard

Needles: 4mm needles
 Wool colours: Beige * Pink * Brown * Black
 Level: Intermediate
 Abbreviations: st(s) – stitch(es) st st – stocking stitch garter stitch – knit all rows k - knit k2tog – knit two together

How you knit it: Cast on 31 sts. Starting with a knit row, knit 14 rows in st st. Next row: k2tog to last st, k1 (16sts). Next row: purl. Next row: k2tog to end (8sts). Cut the yarn and pull it through the remaining stitches and fasten off.
 Ears: (make 2) Cast on 7sts and work 6 rows in garter stitch. Next row: k2, k3tog k2 (5sts). Knit another 7 rows in garter stitch. Next row: k1, k3tog k1 (3sts). Knit another 5 rows in garter stitch then knit all 3sts together and pull yarn through the loop.
 Making up: Use a sewing needle to join side seams. Sew end in at the tip of the ears and, pinching the bottom of the ears so they stand up, sew them to the head. Embroider eyes, nose and mouth

Jigsaw and Book Swaps

Thanks to a large donation of some 40 jigsaws, we've lots for you to choose from if you're looking for a swap or to buy.

But we're always looking for jigsaws and books for our "swap or buy" at the Hub.



Please look out any you have finished with and select some new ones to take away when you bring them in.

Swap yours free of charge, or pay £1 for a jigsaw or 50 pence for a book if you don't have any to bring in.





What is the 50+ Network?

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 over 50 special interest groups and run day trips, holidays, concerts, dinners and other events.

Limitation of Liability

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.

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 visit?

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

Thanks to all our members

A big thank you to everyone who has renewed their membership this year.

Thank you for staying with us whilst our activities were restricted during lockdowns, and for putting your faith in the Network as we re-start our activities.

Special thanks to those who kept their direct debit payment at £20, effectively giving a £10 donation on top of the downward-revised fee for 2021 of £10.

If you hadn't already picked up your membership card from the Hub, you should have found it enclosed in this newsletter.

Please contact us if you have not yet received it.

Contact West Lothian 50+ Network

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Make the rest of your life the best of your life

