

Network News

October 2020 edition



Foreword

I had hoped in this newsletter to finally be able to tell you when our Hub would re-open.

Having put all the appropriate measures in place, we received the go-ahead from Environmental Health.

We had also hoped to be able to start back some of our groups, especially the walking groups, along with a selection of indoor groups where we could practice social distancing, in our new temporary premises (read about this on page 3).

However I'm writing this the day after Scotland's First Minister announced new, stricter measures to combat the second wave of Coronavirus. We're back to not being able to welcome visitors into our homes, new curfews in pubs and restaurants and working from home where possible.

The Committee took a difficult decision this month to postpone our AGM once again – more about this on page 8 – and we're seeking a mandate from our members to support this decision.

Looking on the bright side, we've lots of good news to share with you this month. The first of our online

Zoom group meetings took place, with both Bathgate and Livingston Coffee Clubs getting involved. If the virus persists over the winter, we hope we can help more groups explore this option. Read about how these groups got on and how you might get involved on page 4.

Our first remote raffle was well received, especially by all our winners, who were not only pleased to receive their prizes but enjoyed seeing a friendly face at the door when Tracy turned up to deliver them. We're pleased to say that we're able to repeat the raffle again this month. You'll find the list of last month's prize winners and photos of some of the recipients on page 9.

We've been in touch recently with our old friends at OIR (Opportunities in Retirement) in Ayr to find out how they have been coping with Covid-19 challenges. Read about what they have been doing and how we are sharing ideas with them, including plans for a new Pen Pal initiative, on page 14.

It may only be September but already the shops are filling their shelves with all things Christmas.



So as our thoughts start to turn towards the festive season, on page 15 we've got a couple of locally inspired gift ideas for you.

Finally, it's been 2 years since we last surveyed our members for their views on Network activities and whether they met our members expectations. Although the last 6 months have been difficult, they came at the end of what we hope was perceived as an eventful period of growth for the Network, and so we have issued our latest Members Survey this month. Whatever your views, we hope you'll share them with us.

My very best wishes to you all,
Anne Webster, Convener



Covid-19 compliance measures at the Members Hub

When we are finally able to re-open our Members' Hub you'll find things are a little different.

We've been busy making everything Covid-19 compliant and Willie Webster who takes care of all our building issues has been liaising with officers from Environmental Health to ensure that we are meeting the guidelines.

As you arrive there'll be a new non-touch door system and just inside we'll have a hand sanitising station for everyone entering the Hub to use.

A one-way system has been put in place, as well as desk and room dividers and a screen on the counter area to protect members and staff.

There'll be an enhanced regular cleaning and sanitizing routine of all wipeable surfaces.

You'll be pleased to know that our fundraiser Laura has successfully applied for funding to help towards the cost of all these changes.

Initially we will need to introduce an appointment system for your visits and we won't be able to serve tea or coffee during your visit as before.

Our aim is to create a place where you feel safe to visit and to protect our staff when they return to their workplace.

New security for the Hub

As we move towards re-opening our Members Hub, a decision has been taken to install CCTV cameras and monitoring equipment to provide added security for our members, staff and premises.

Fixed lens vandal proof day/night cameras will be installed next to the front door and at the far side of building, which will capture images of anyone accessing our premises and in the lane on either side of our building.

A CCTV monitor will be installed inside the Hub and the whole system will connect to our internet connection so that we can also monitor the CCTV system remotely.

We hope that these new measures will increase members' confidence in visiting our premises and give our staff a greater sense of security at work.



CCTV cameras to be installed to monitor access to the Hub

New activity hub coming in George Place

In an exciting new development for the Network, additional premises have been secured where members can meet once again to take part in their special interest groups.

One of the impacts of Covid 19 has been the closure of a number of the spaces in which we have met in the past. This includes the Bathgate Partnership Centre and Rosemount Court, neither of which have yet re-opened to outside groups.

In order to be able to have a space that we could call our own, where we can implement Covid-safe measures, the Network has secured the use of the premises right in the centre of Bathgate.

The premises at 6 George Place, formerly the Age Scotland shop, have stood empty for a while. The Co-op which owns the building, have agreed an arrangement which allows the Network to occupy the premises as long as they remain unlet.

The premises are large and will allow us to run some of our groups again, putting the proscribed social distancing measures in place. In the early days of returning to group activities, the plan is to start in discussion with groups such as Bridge, Crafts and language classes which can avoid contact with others.

We will be in contact with group leaders in the coming weeks to explore how best these new premises can be used.



Exciting news - new premises for group meetings

Coffee clubs meet virtually



The Network's two Coffee Clubs took a leap forward in September to embrace a new way to meet.

Facilitated by Development Officer Tracy, some members of the Livingston Coffee Club, who before lockdown met regularly on Tuesdays at the Lime Kiln, met online on 15 September.

Tracy stayed online to offer technical assistance but it was not needed so instead she enjoyed a coffee and a chat with Cathie, Lesley, Kath, John and group leader Teresa.

After finding out how everyone had been keeping, a discussion ensued about where people had been visiting, including reviews of the best places around to go for coffee, scones, soup and sandwiches. No wonder some were complaining that lockdown had led to a few extra pounds going on!

Lesley, who volunteers for the Food Train also spoke about the fabulous work their volunteers do and was so enthusiastic that one of the other members was keen to sign up too.

All in all, the group had a lovely time catching up and agreed they would do it again in a few weeks. Their next meeting is on Tuesday 6 October.

Not to be outdone, the Bathgate Coffee Club, which normally meets in the Ballencrieff pub in Bathgate on Wednesdays, met virtually using Zoom video conferencing technology the following day on 16 September.

Anne, Sheila, Hazel and Barbara enjoyed a good chat about where they had been and what they had had to cancel because of Covid-19. I don't think we're giving away any secrets if we say that there was another good discussion about where to go for lunch, with garden centres featuring high on the list.

This meeting was also declared a success and the group will now meet on Zoom every Wednesday at 11am.

If members of either Coffee Club would like to join in, please get in touch with the Members' Hub.

Because the meeting is held on Zoom numbers will be limited. Don't worry if you have never used Zoom before, help will be provided. You can join using a PC, laptop or phone.

We'd like to hear from any of our groups who, in the continued absence of any face-to-face Network organised meet ups, might like to explore holding virtual meetings.

Zoom made easy

GET STARTED

- * Go to www.zoom.us and click on SIGN UP in the top right of the page.
 - * Enter your date of birth and CONTINUE.
 - * Key in your email address and the Captcha Code shown.
 - * Click on SIGN UP.
 - * Check your emails—you should receive one asking you to confirm your email address.
 - * Click on ACTIVATE ACCOUNT.
 - * You will be taken to a page asking if you are signing up on behalf of a school. Click NO and CONTINUE.
 - * Now enter your name and a password (you will need to enter this twice).
 - * Click CONTINUE.
 - * You can SKIP THE NEXT STEP by clicking on the button.
- You are now ready to join a meeting.

JOIN A ZOOM MEETING

On your phone or tablet:

- * Go to your app or play store and search for Zoom. Download the app, then open it and SIGN IN using your email and the password you created.
- Alternatively, if you are using a PC or a laptop:*

- * Go to www.zoom.us
- * Click on SIGN IN and use the email and the password you created.

Once signed in, you can join a meeting using the meeting ID and password that you have been given for the meeting. This will normally come by email from the person who has set up the meeting.





Members' Survey

After a difficult six months for the Network, and two years after our last Members' Survey, the time seemed right to seek feedback about Network activities and their significance to our Members.

The survey is a little longer than it has been in the past, mainly because of current circumstances which have forced the complete close down of our activities for the first time since the inception of the Network some 26 years ago. For this reason, we have split the survey into two halves. Part 1 will ask you to recall pre-Covid days, when we were able to offer you a wide range of activities. Here we will ask you to give us your feedback about what worked for you and what didn't.

In part 2, we're looking both at the last 6 months, as well as looking to the future, asking you to weigh up how well we did under the circumstances, and how we can make things work going forward.

The purpose of undertaking this

survey is to give guidance to the Committee as they continue to develop the organisation. The results will also be of interest to the many external funders who have supported us financially so far, and to whom we need to demonstrate that they are receiving good value for money. The results will also provide substance for future funding applications.

Members who are on email will receive an invitation by this means to complete a survey online. This is the fastest, most efficient and most cost-effective way to gather data, as it is collated automatically.

Members who are not on email will receive a copy of the survey in

the post, which you are invited to return to the members' Hub by the mid-October survey closing date.

By these two methods we aim to invite 100% of our members to give us feedback, which hopefully will result in a significant sample size for our results. We hope that as many members as possible will set aside a short time to complete the survey.



Cap lowered on fuel bills this winter

Good news seems in short supply these days but here's a wee update on fuel bills that you may like to be aware of as winter approaches. From October, energy regulator Ofgem will lower the cap on default dual-fuel energy tariffs by £84, from an average of £1,126 a year to a record low of £1,042.

It will also lower the cap on energy

bills for customers using pre-payment energy meters by an average of £94 a year, from £1,164 to £1,070 a year.

Heating our homes is always a big cost in the winter – and all the more so if we are likely to be spending more time at home due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

If you are worried about your fuel bills, West Lothian Council's Advice Shop has specialist

advisors who can offer a wide range of advice and assistance to help you fully understand your energy issues and become more energy efficient. You do not need to be a council housing tenant to benefit from energy advice. Anyone can access our service, regardless of your housing tenure and all advice is confidential and free of charge.

To speak to an energy advisor phone the Advice Shop on 01506 283000

Bathgate in Bloom



In spite of lock down, and the ensuing difficulty in co-ordinating volunteers and resources, Bathgate in Bloom once again brightened up Bathgate this summer with beautiful floral displays in the town centre.

Bathgate in Bloom, along with the Adopt a Station initiative – is co-ordinated each year by Enterprising Bathgate.

Some 114 hanging baskets add colour to Bathgate town centre each summer as well as the flower beds at the top of Hopetoun Street, the raised bed outside the

Regal Theatre, the landscaping outside Albacare, some of the soft landscaping in Acredale car park and the plant troughs and containers situated at the railway station.

The displays are normally funded by sponsorship from local traders and organisations in the town, including the West Lothian 50 Plus Network, however this year, in recognition that many businesses were closed for a period, the costs were all borne by Enterprising Bathgate.

Well done to all the volunteers who made it happen!

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.

New speed limits across West Lothian

Look out for the new speed limits which have been introduced across West Lothian from 24th August!



Existing speed limits in towns and villages have been temporarily reduced on some roads to 20mph and 40mph limits have also been introduced in some of the rural areas such as the Bathgate Hills and around Winchburgh and Harburn.

A programme of vegetation clearance works on existing cycle paths and footways has also commenced. This maintenance work will involve cutting back both overhanging foliage and verges on key routes to improve path widths for walkers and cyclists.

Over the next few weeks physical distancing measures will be introduced at some of the more heavily used bus stops and narrow footways within towns. The improvements will make it easier for users to social distance at pinch points.

Physical distancing signage has also been designed for town centres and villages and started going up in September.

Brand Bathgate emphasizes the town's proud history

A new Bathgate brand that emphasises the town's long and proud history has been launched by Bathgate Community Council.

The town dates back to 1160 and uses this in its branding as well as the Kirkton Park Gates as a symbol of the town.

The Community Council's aim is to use the town's historic and architectural heritage to encourage people to visit the town and explore it for themselves.

With funding from the Scottish Government, the Community Council has prepared a leaflet entitled "Why Bathgate is famous?" in collaboration with the Bennie Museum.

And in co-operation with the Bathgate History Group, they also plan to publish a booklet highlighting a series of walks around the town.

A further ambition is to install maps at places in the town to help visitors to navigate their way around, making it more "visitor friendly".

Brand guidelines have been published for any groups in the town to use if they wish to reinforce the message.





AGM postponed

At the 50+ Network Committee meeting held on 8th September it was decided to once again postpone our AGM.

Our Annual General Meeting is normally held in May, immediately before our monthly members meeting, and this of course was cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

It was initially rescheduled for 17th October 2020 when we anticipated holding the meeting virtually using a video conferencing platform.

However with obstacles slowing up the process of producing our annual report and accounts, as well as the technical issues of using video conferencing, we don't feel that we are ready yet to hold our AGM.

The committee is mindful of its responsibilities to produce annual accounts and hold an AGM and have consulted OSCR, the Scottish Charity Regulator, for guidance.

The following guidance is given on OSCR's website:

"The COVID-19 pandemic is going to have an impact on your ability to hold your AGM. This might make it difficult for you to finalise your annual report and accounts."

"Wherever possible, we would ask you to try to get these to us on time. All you need to do is log on to OSCR Online as usual and scan us your report and accounts. However, we understand that it might be difficult for some to

finalise their annual report and accounts, we will take an understanding and proportionate approach to this and no charity in this situation will be penalised for being late."

"You might decide that as a result of COVID-19 and the official health advice postponing your AGM or other meetings until restrictions are lifted or meetings can be held observing physical distancing rules is the best option. It may be that by postponing these meetings, you are not fulfilling what it says in your governing document or you will not be able to finalise your annual report and accounts. Where you decide it is necessary to postpone you should record this decision, demonstrating good governance of your charity. We will be understanding and proportionate should any concerns be raised with us about the postponement of AGMs or other meetings".

With this in mind we propose to maintain the status quo and postpone our AGM until May 2021. We therefore seek a mandate from our members to do this and have included in this newsletter a separate sheet which gives you the opportunity to object to this position.

If you do object, simply return the form to our Members' Hub.

New Committee members sought

Would you like to help shape the future direction of the West Lothian 50 + Network?

We are looking for members to serve on our committee, so if you have ideas about how to take the Network forward and time to spare, why not get involved?

Our Constitution states that you should have been a member for at least 12 months before joining the committee. Additionally the length of service of Committee Members is 4 years, and two Members should leave the Committee each year, according to their length of service, to make way for new members.

We're also looking for specific areas of expertise where individuals could bring their skills to bear to best effect. These might include financial management, HR or experience as a company secretary.

If you think you might like to get involved, please let us know and we'll get in touch for an informal chat about what's involved.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Remote Raffle Prize Winners

We're pleased to announce the winners of our first ever remote raffle.

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

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

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

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

John Walker (332)

Wacky Metro map

John Wilson (341)

Bottle of Wine

Betty Bishop (110)

Bottle of Wine

Carmel Muir (202)

Bottle of Wine

William McEwan (474)

Bottle of Wine

John Calder (148)

Shortbread

Alison Muir (201)

Chocolates

Karen Thomson (374)

Chocolates

Elizabeth Lindsay (001)

Biscuits

John Reid (280)

Biscuits



We'll be repeating the remote raffle again this month, so fingers crossed that you'll be one of our next lucky winners!



Are you offended?

A consultancy which has been hired to give MPs lessons in respectful language included the words "lady", "pensioner" and "girl" in a list of words that could offend.

Challenge Consultancy aims to teach MPs to 'understand, recognise and address their unconscious bias and that they may encounter in others', and 'develop their cultural competency', adding that lessons on 'respectful language' will be one of the main pillars of the course for MPs.

The firm previously ran training courses for Scottish Parliament staff in which it included the words "lady", "pensioner" and "girl" in a list of words that could offend.

We asked for your comments about this on our facebook page. Here are some of your thoughts:



Jim: "I am a pensioner and do not feel offended. Should someone call me a lady or girl, however, I would not be offended but concerned for the state of their eyesight. It's not usually the words that offend but the context!"

Elizabeth: "In times gone by it was miss or mrs, madam lady is very respectful. All in context, English language is very diverse in context and meaning"

David: "PC gone mad!"

Anne: "I'm ok with 'lady' - seems more respectful. But the others are definitely better than 'pal'.....it drives me nuts - I'm not their pal"

Lesley: "Years ago whilst living in a remote part of Aberdeen I was addressed as mistress by elderly ladies at a castle I was visiting. My niece who was with me was gobsmacked. I assumed it was old fashioned courtesy"

Samantha: "I'd rather be called a lady than a hen or a wifey lol"

Eleanor: "Let's not forget "Doll" to go along with hen or pal!"

Eileen: "Why can't people just call you by your name? If they don't know your name then older lady, elderly gentleman would do. Why label people as pensioner, it's not a benefit, it's been saved for over many years. You don't call a woman, man, couple on universal credit "the Unicredits" for example. Think about how silly it is to label anyone under any circumstances"

What do you think?



Friends Remembered

We're sad to tell you that we have heard of the recent passing of Ann Marshall who was a member of the 50+ Network.

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

New Hub email

A wee reminder that we have a new email address. Please add

Hub@westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk to your contacts, otherwise our emails may be filed straight into your email junk folder and you may never see them.



Support the Network with AmazonSmile

Do you shop online on Amazon? Did you know that you can raise money for the 50+ Network whilst you shop – at no extra cost? Here are the answers to some of the questions you may have.

What is AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support a charity of your choice every time you shop, at no cost to you. You'll find the same prices and selection as Amazon, with the added bonus that AmazonSmile will donate a portion of the purchase price to your selected charity.

How do I shop at AmazonSmile?

Go to smile.amazon.co.uk on your web browser or activate AmazonSmile on your Amazon Shopping app on your iOS or Android phone (found under 'settings' on your app). On your browser, you may also want to add a bookmark to smile.amazon.co.uk to make it easier to return. When you're using the app, always check for the "AmazonSmile" logo to ensure you're activated for AmazonSmile.

How do I activate AmazonSmile

amazon smile
You shop. Amazon gives.

on my Amazon Shopping app?

AmazonSmile customers on Android devices with version 5.0+ or iOS devices with version 12+, who have upgraded to the latest version of the Amazon Shopping app can find "AmazonSmile" listed in the Settings menu. From there, you can follow onboarding instructions to activate AmazonSmile on your device.

Do I need to renew AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile renewals happen twice a year to help keep AmazonSmile on mobile app. AmazonSmile will notify you of these renewals via push notifications and through in-app notifications. If you miss a renewal, you can reactivate at any time by repeating the steps to 'turn on' AmazonSmile on your mobile device. There is no renewal period for browser shopping on AmazonSmile, which you can use any time by typing 'smile.amazon.co.uk' into your browser.

Which products on AmazonSmile are eligible for charitable donations?

Millions of products are eligible for donations to charities. You will see eligible products marked "Eligible for smile.amazon.co.uk donation" on their product detail pages. Recurring Subscribe-and-Save purchases and subscription renewals are not currently eligible.

Can I use my existing Amazon.co.uk account on AmazonSmile?

Yes, you use the same account on amazon.co.uk and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List and other account settings are also the same.

How do I select a charitable organisation to support when shopping on AmazonSmile?

On your first visit you need to select a charity to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Your selection will be remembered, and then every eligible purchase you make through AmazonSmile will result in a donation.

What charities can I choose from?

You can select from a list of charities that are registered with the Charity Commission of either England and Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland and which have enrolled in the AmazonSmile programme. We hope that you will select the West Lothian 50+ Network (Scottish Charity SC024257) !

How much of my purchase does Amazon.co.uk donate?

AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of the net purchase price (excluding VAT, returns and shipping fees) of your eligible purchases.

Please note: If you don't find the 50+ Network on AmazonSmile when you first look for it, please persevere as there has been a hiccup in our registration. But all should be sorted for your Christmas shopping!

Easyfundraising

Don't forget you can also use Easyfundraising every time you shop online to raise funds for West Lothian 50+ Network when buying online.

Go to www.easyfundraising.co.uk or give the Hub a call for help



Local News for the Visually Impaired

Do you know someone who is visually impaired or who has difficulty reading?

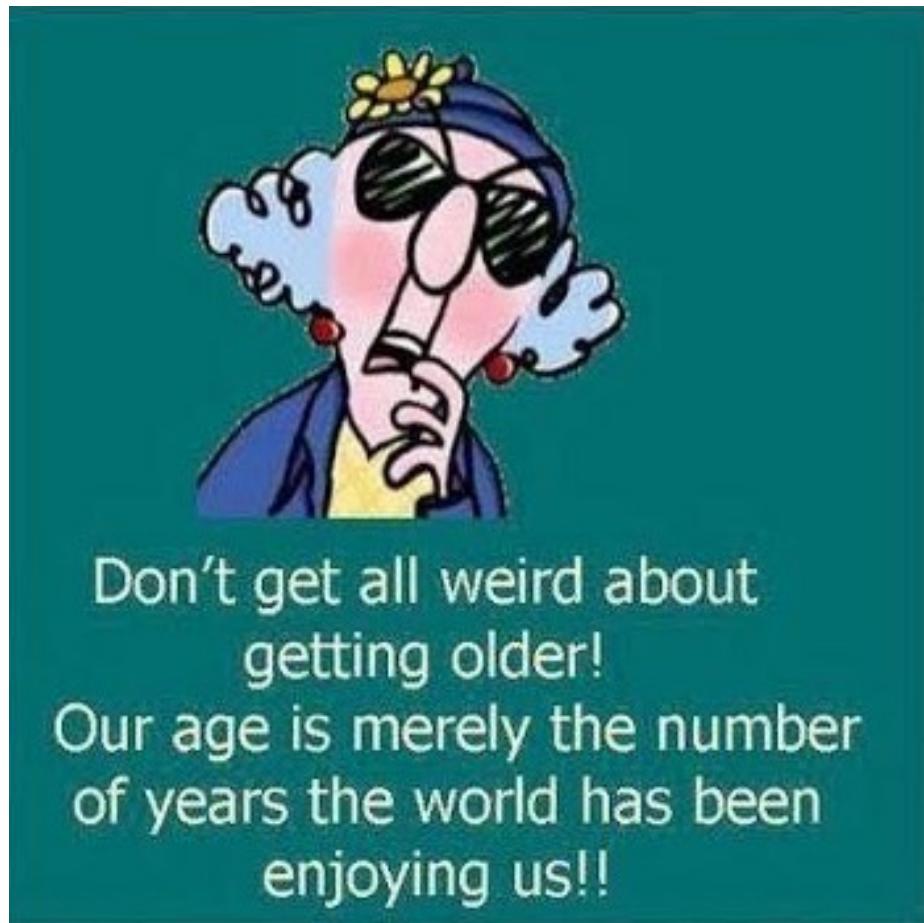
West Lothian Boomerang is a registered charity which provides a talking newspaper service for the West Lothian area.

The West Lothian Courier is recorded onto memory sticks and supplied to registered blind, partially sighted or unable to read small print members.

Recordings in the form of Podcasts can also be found on the organisation's website.

WL Boomerang is produced weekly with recording days on Thursdays and Fridays at a studio in Whitburn. If you would like to volunteer or know of someone who would like to volunteer, get in touch. There is a wide range of volunteer roles such as readers, technicians, duplication or distribution.

Find out more here at <http://wlboomerang.co.uk/>



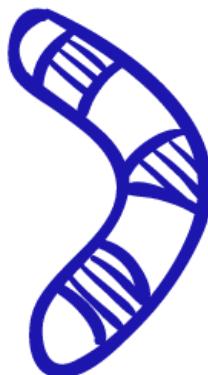
Thank you for your feedback

Hi Teresa ,thank you for your E -mail and thanks for all the hard work that you and your team undertake during this crazy pandemic.

I don t know about anybody else but I appreciate the newsletters and updates you send out. It can t be easy in such difficult circumstances. Anyway keep going and thanks again.

So pleased to have won a prize and look forward to receiving it and maybe a chance to say Hello to Tracey, she has telephoned me to check if I was ok but it will be nice to put a face to the voice.

Kind regards , Bill McEwan.



West Lothian
BOOMERANG
Talking Newspaper for the Visually Impaired

Working in partnership - sharing ideas with OIR

As we try to move forward as a Network constrained by the current circumstances, it's more important than ever to talk with similar organisations and share experiences.

We have a very long-standing relationship with OIR (Opportunities in Retirement) in Ayr, who started their group a little ahead of ours and who helped "show us the ropes" in the early days.

Our development officer Tracy recently had a long chat with OIR's office manager and only member of staff, Margaret.

Like our staff, Margaret is currently working from home, going into the office occasionally to check for mail etc. Like ours, OIR's committee meet regularly on Zoom.

In addition to their volunteer group leaders, OIR also has a number of volunteers who do postie duties as well as work in their office to support their 1200 or so members. The volunteers are recruited through a question on the membership application form and subsequently interviewed to assess their suitability for the position.

Tracy has now also started to write volunteer job specifications and volunteer agreements for our Network which we hope to be able to start using for recruiting new volunteers (as well as giving to the existing volunteers) and creating a volunteer register. This is one area

where collaboration between our two organisations would be invaluable.

OIR have not yet made a decision on when their office will re open however when it does, they plan to open with only one member of staff, one volunteer and one member or member of the public being allowed in at any one time. The public and members will be able to book a half hour appointment to come in while the office is open. This is to avoid members queueing outside when there is no space to safely enter the premises. It is unlikely that this will happen before stage 4 in the Scottish Government roadmap.

Some of OIR's outdoor groups have already started up. Walking groups are organised to keep in smaller sub-groups – ie a group of 20 will be split into 4x5 and keep a social distance*. They all meet up at the final destination outdoors somewhere to have their coffee which they have brought themselves. They are not organising any coffee shop stops.

OIR have a tennis group which has also restarted. For this they book and pay for 3 courts and use only the 2 outer ones. They stick to the same partner so they are not mixing more than is necessary.

For all of these groups, the group leader has produced a restart plan (after being given a simple template to use and adapt) which is effectively a risk assessment. The plans were approved by the committee before

the groups were allowed to restart. OIR will share their template with us.

OIR do not envisage their indoor groups starting anytime soon. They are taking their lead from the members, most of whom do not feel confident to restart mixing indoors. And like us, many of the premises they use for their groups have not yet re-opened.

Prior to Covid 19 OIR had fortnightly 'Townhall Meetings' similar to our monthly meetings. These were open to members and non-members and attracted around 120 – 150 people. These had stop during lockdown but have been replaced with lockdown talks - half hour-long video conferencing meetings with a speaker, ranging from entertainment, factual information, advice etc. All attendees are "muted" during the talk and they attract around 50-60 members, many of whom join early and have a chat before the talk starts. Tracy is planning to attend one of these meetings to get some ideas, and will stay in contact with her counterpart at OIR on a regular basis to support each other and share ideas.

*Before the latest guidelines





Would you like a Pen Pal?

Do you have fond memories of having a pen pal as a child or teenager? If so, you may be interested to learn about a new initiative that we are exploring with our sister organisation, Opportunities in Retirement (OIR) in Ayr.

We're encouraging our members to put pen to paper (or to correspond by email if you prefer) to keep connected during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our proposed Pen Pal Club aims to foster connections between our members in West Lothian, and those of OIR, assisting them find a new friend to write to in Ayr or the surrounding area.

As we face the prospect of more months of staying at home, the 50+ Network is constantly looking for ways to help our members feel less isolated. To this end, our development officer Tracy is taking forward the initiative with her counterpart in Ayr.

Tracy said: "It's lovely to receive letters and news from others and it's hoped that there will be lots of interest given the current restrictions which limit meaningful face-to-face connections".

"It will also be a great way for our

members to get to know people and news from another place," she said. "And when we are once again free to meet up and travel, we can plan reciprocal group visits so that pen friends can meet in person."

The 50+ Network has a long-standing association with OIR which provided the inspiration and support for the establishment of our own organisation some 26 years ago.

If you would like to get involved, please contact the Hub and register your interest.



Helping isolated members connect with others

Do you feel isolated? Are you still shielding?

Might it help if you had access to the internet to connect up with distant friends or family members, access information and services or even play games to help pass the time?

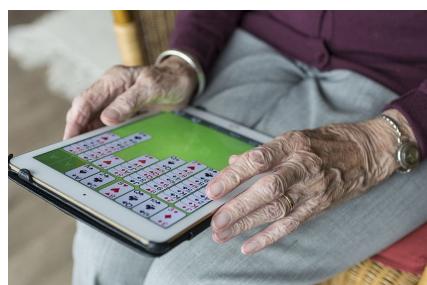
If you're not sure where to start or can't afford the cost of a device or internet access, help is at hand.

The 50+ Network has received free of charge 2 iPads, 3 Chromebooks and 5 portable mobile wi-fi hotspots (one for each of the devices) with 20GB of data per month, for 12 months. These are to be distributed to our more isolated members who currently have no wifi or technology.

We have received the devices from West Lothian Council who are distributing on behalf of *Connecting Scotland*, a Scottish Government programme set up in response to Coronavirus.

The initiative provides iPads and Chromebooks, as well as support to develop digital skills for people who are digitally excluded and on low incomes.

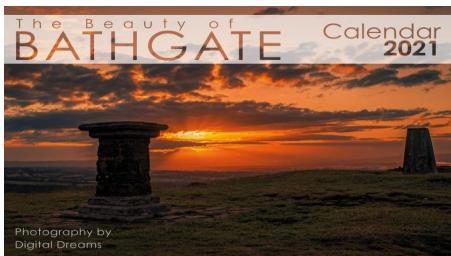
If you would like to apply for one of these kits please get in touch with the Hub saying why you would like one. Support will be provided by our hub co-ordinators, Suzanne and Teresa, to help you get to grips with any technology issues.





It's only September but soon we'll be seeing signs that Christmas is coming in local shops! If you like to start your Christmas shopping early, we've a couple of ideas for gifts that are very local to our area.

Bathgate Calendar



Local photographers David Mowbray and Lisa Wright have produced a calendar of beautiful Bathgate images for 2021.

The calendar features 12 unique local images that showcase Bathgate's wonderful surrounding landscapes. In A4 format these will be ideal to frame at the end of the year.

The spacious A4 planner includes special dates for the town such as the Bathgate Procession and the Highland Games.

The calendars are priced at £9.99 each plus £1.50 for local delivery. If you wish to post to family and friends abroad, postage will be quoted on an individual basis. They won't be available in local shops and are by order only.

You can order by emailing dave7770@sky.com or sending a message via the BathgateCalendar facebook page.

Wacky Metros

Ever got caught in the rain in Bathgate and wondered how great it would be if the town had a metro? No, me neither, but one local man thought exactly that, and took it to the next step to sketch out a plan for one.

A wacky idea perhaps, but Michael Kerr's fantasy *Wacky Metro* maps have caught popular imagination and led to the development of a small family business.

Michael Kerr (who just happens to be married to our development officer Tracy) spent a few days during lockdown drawing the maps using Google maps and local knowledge to co-ordinate the positioning of lines and stations.

The Bathgate design features the 'Easton Line' and 'Balbardie Line' and Michael has subsequently gone on to develop a Livingston version which features the 'Almondvale Line' and 'Calder Line', as well as versions for Armadale, Linlithgow, Dunfermline, Whitburn, Falkirk, Stirling and Inverness.

Michael, whose day job is in IT said "I was bored one rainy Saturday during lockdown. I said to my son over breakfast how funny it would be if Bathgate had a metro, and I suggested a station at the Steelyard.

"He then threw a host of other stations at me so I drew it out, and added things like small burns as prominent rivers.

"I put it on the Bathgate Bairns

facebook page and got some great feedback, so I decided to create some more."

"Then I wondered if I could sell them – so I sourced a printer, set up an online shop, built a simple web page, got a Facebook presence and came up with a name and a logo."

"It was a very slow start, I think I sold two in the first seven days and was thinking of giving up when one of my two buyers posted a picture of hers, framed on her wall, saying how much she loved it.

"Then I drew Linlithgow, then Livingston, and then six more to where we are today. Still small and low key, but confident enough to keep it going. We're still a small 'bedroom' project, but it's nice to get a bit extra in for next year's holidays".

"I do the drawings, my wife Tracy is integral, she does all the media, and the unglamorous post and packaging. Both our boys are grown up so we have a bit of spare time on our hands and this is filling a void nicely, especially when many social activities are stopped due to the pandemic."

The maps can be purchased from wackymetro.co.uk





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

Thank you

Special thanks to Sue Bedford-Visser, Teresa, Suzanne and Tracy for all the hard work pulling these newsletters together during lockdown. These newsletters are hugely time consuming to publish and I know that Sue in particular has been burning the midnight oil on several occasions to get these out. Normally, we publish a Newsletter once a quarter but we have been trying to publish these monthly to keep in contact with our members and as I said it's a big job done well! You will have noticed we are posting these out to every member. This is because we were informed that during the lockdown when libraries, cafes etc were closed, some people no longer had access to wi-fi and therefore their email. To ensure everyone had contact from the Network at least once a month we obtained funding to cover the cost of posting the Newsletter out to everyone. We would love to hear from you, what you think of the newsletter, and any stories about what you have been doing during lockdown.

Anne Webster,
Convener

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

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