

Network News

August 2020 edition



Dear Member...

Making the Hub Covid safe

These are challenging times but I want to assure you that as a Committee we continue to try to find ways forward for the Network. We are currently updating the Hub to make it Covid safe and to try to protect our members as well as we can. We will be putting in place a no-touch door system, a one-way route round the Hub, sanitising stations and screens to protect the Hub Co-ordinators. We hope to open the Hub during October, depending on the Government guidelines.

Indoor Groups and activities

We have decided we will not open for indoor groups or meetings until at least the end of December 2020. The dilemma we face is keeping everyone safe and maintaining social distancing. The Partnership Centre and Rosemount Gardens, where we hold a lot of our groups, say they are unlikely to allow groups back until Stage 4 is reached. They don't expect to allow groups back in before January 2021. We will review this decision in January 2021 and will keep you up to date with our progress in the meantime.

Outdoor Groups and activities

We hope we can restart some of our outdoor groups sooner than that. We need to be sure we are safe so we are taking advice from our group leaders, other organisations and the Scottish Government as to the best way to comply with this. Some of the issues we have are that we are limited to 5 households, we have to be socially distant and some paths do not lend themselves to this. Toilets are a problem when out and about. We had hoped to start bowling but this is currently restricted to bowling club members only.

No Network Groups started yet

In the meantime, while I know some of you are meeting/walking as groups of friends, we as a Network have not yet restarted any groups. I will keep you posted on our progress with this. It is important when we resume that you all feel safe, we comply with the regulations, you enjoy the activity and don't feel uncomfortable.

Safeguarding the Network until we can reopen

We have been busy with Laura, our wonderful fundraiser, trying to get the funds necessary to update the Hub, pay the bills, rent, water, gas, electricity, telephone etc.

As we cannot meet, we are unable to do our usual activities to raise funds internally, so it is important that we look at external sources. We have been fairly successful and have received a total of £29,000 to help keep the Network going until we all get back together. This includes a grant of £10,000 from West Lothian Council and £9,000 from Foundation Scotland.

We are very appreciative of all donations and grants received and want to say many thanks to Laura for all her hard work.

My best wishes to you all in these difficult times

I wish you all the best and hope you are keeping active. If you need help or just a chat, please do get in touch with Teresa or Suzanne who will be delighted to hear from you and will try to help where they can. Their number is 01506 635510 and they are available during the usual office hours of Monday to Friday 10.00am to 2.00pm.



Anne Webster, Convenor



Keeping In Touch With Our Members

The Network continues to operate, albeit remotely, in these uncertain times. Suzanne and Teresa, our Hub Co-ordinators, have returned part-time from furlough but are still working from home. They are available to take your telephone calls (which are forwarded from the Hub's main number), and answer any questions you may have during office hours Monday - Friday 10am - 2pm - but please don't look for them at our Hub which is still unmanned. The ladies have really enjoyed catching up with members now they are back at work. The telephone number to call is 01506 635510.

Tracy continues in her role as Development Officer, supporting the Network and the Committee as plans are made for the future. As restrictions are greater on indoor groups, we are particularly keen to develop new outdoor groups. If anyone thinks they may be interested in leading a new outdoor group, please get in touch. Previous suggestions have been gardening or bird watching but it could be anything. Would you be interested in reviving the Flora and Fauna group that used to meet? If you have any ideas, Tracy would like to know and will be happy to support any new group leaders.

Remember if you use Facebook, you can also keep up to date by following the West Lothian 50+ page at <https://www.facebook.com/WestLothian50PlusNetwork> The Weekenders group have a separate Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/weekenderswestlothian>. This page was set up to enable members to come together during the height of the Coronavirus pandemic. The Two Left Feet Walking Group also keep in touch with members through their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/twoleftfeetwalkers>

News and updates are also posted by email, so make sure to let us know if you have changed your email address recently.

Supporting Digital Contact For Isolated Members

To support member communication, especially for those who are shielding, the 50+ Network has received 2 iPads, 3 Chromebooks and 5 portable mifi systems (one for each of the devices) from the Connecting Scotland programme. These are to be distributed to our more isolated members who currently have no wifi or technology.

Local councils have received allocations of these devices for distribution in their local areas from 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. The devices are being delivered in the next few weeks and we would like to distribute them as quickly as possible. Support will be provided to help you get to grips with any technology issues.

New Email Address

West Lothian 50+ Network has a new email address, **Hub@westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk** 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. For the time being, we will still be able to receive any emails you send to the old address as they will be forwarded to the new one, however we will respond from our new email address.

Development Officer, Tracy Kerr, also has a new email address. If you have any ideas or suggestions about developing the Network you can get in touch with her directly at development@westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk

West Lothian Libraries Open Again

Six West Lothian Libraries are now reissuing their books after several months of closure.

From Wednesday 15 July, Simpson Library (Bathgate), Broxburn Library, Carmondean Connected, Lanthorn Library, Linlithgow Library and Whitburn Library began to offer two new services to library members to enable access to reading material.

Library members can either **Click and Collect** or **Phone and Collect** up to 5 books at their appointment.

Members using Click and Collect can request their books through the online catalogue and request their appointment slot using the My PC Booking System.

For members using the Phone and Collect system, library staff will select books from requested genres and give out appointment times and details.

Appointments for collection will be available between 10.00am - 12.30pm and 1.00pm - 4.30pm Monday - Friday.

Members are not be able to enter the libraries and members are asked to maintain social distancing at all times.

Further information, including participating libraries' telephone numbers and instructions for members on how to use the new services, is available at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/libraries>

West Lothian Libraries continue to offer online reading options such as eBooks, eTalking Books and eMagazines.

More information on these can be found online at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/eLibrary>



Generation Arts Postcards

Included with the newsletter is a postcard from Generation Arts for one of its new **Boundless** projects.

Boundless projects encourage people to create and connect in new ways. **Holler** is one of the first projects, inviting people to make a postcard, send a postcard, receive a postcard. It's up to you to fill in the back with whatever comes to mind. A poem, a doodle, a drawing, a cross-stitch or a print – anything goes.

More information on the project can be found online at <https://generationarts.wordpress.com/programme/>

Put your own mark on your postcard! We would love to see photos of what you create, send and receive.





Tree Planting Update

It's almost a year since the Network's tree planting event on a rainy day last September. Undeterred by the poor weather, our intrepid members braved the elements on the exposed slopes beneath Cockleroy hill by Beecraigs to work with park rangers and plant some 250 trees as part of our 25 years celebration. A variety of trees were planted, largely Silver Birch, but some other mixed native trees too, such as Rowan, Oak and Scots Pine.



Convenor Anne Webster was on the hill recently and reports that all the trees, which have been staked and protected against wildlife, appear to be doing well.



**A society grows great
when old men plant
trees whose shade
they know they shall
never sit in.**

Greek Proverb

Do you recognise the spot?

It's raining in this photo as well. ..just like on the tree planting day last year when we got absolutely soaked!



Notice of AGM

This year's Annual General Meeting will take place on 17th October 2020. It will be held remotely using Microsoft 365 Teams and an invite will be sent nearer the time.



Holidays

Skye (April) - We are pleased to report that all refunds for this cancelled holiday have now been issued to members.

Portugal (November) - Heather has been in touch with members who have booked to advise that the balance for the walking holiday is due by 20 September. The company providing this holiday has not cancelled it, meaning that if individual members cancel or do not go, they will not be entitled to a refund and that they are not covered by their insurance for this cost.

Harrogate (December) - In the interests of the safety and well being of our members, it has been decided to cancel this holiday. Refunds of the £30 deposit will be processed and sent as soon as possible.

Coin Jar Charity

Soldiers Off the Street was the 50+ Network's chosen "Coin Jar" charity for 2019-2020. Many members were delighted to support this charity and we have recently sent them a cheque for £566.

The charity helps not only soldiers but all ex-service personnel - Army, RAF and Royal Navy – of past and present conflicts whose lives have been affected by homelessness.

It helps with the provision of clothing, food and rehabilitation, including advice on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, alcoholism, drug abuse, housing and employment. To find out more visit the charity's website at <https://www.soldiersoffthestreet.org>



Each year we select a different charity to support at our AGM – please let us have your nominations for a charity for 2020-2021.

Members' Survey

It is nearly two years since our last members' survey and we are looking into updating this formal way of gaining feedback which will add strength to the Network's future funding applications.

It's a difficult time to conduct a survey when our activities have all but drawn to a halt, but nevertheless the time is perhaps right for members to tell us what they miss most and help us to shape our way forward for the future.

Look out for the members' survey which will be sent out with the next edition of the newsletter.



Shop Local

As businesses gradually start to open up bringing our town centres back to life, we can all do our bit to help. It's more important than ever to shop local and support small traders if we want to continue to have a good choice of local shops and services without having to get in a car or take public transport.

Nationwide, the 'Scotland Loves Local' campaign has recently been launched by the government and Scotland's Towns Partnership.

Close to home, Enterprising Bathgate which runs the local business improvement district has recently revived its *Choose Bathgate* "shop local" campaign to promote the businesses, activities and events (eventually) in the town centre. The *Choose Bathgate* facebook page and website highlight local business offers and updates, showcasing the wide range of shops, services, restaurants, bars and other leisure facilities in the town.

It's been great to see how many of those businesses have taken the opportunity during lockdown to refurbish and improve their premises, as well as making the necessary adjustments to maintain social distancing and keep the virus at bay. It's a great leap of faith on the part

of many, not knowing what the future holds and facing the double whammy of increased



online shopping. Our network has benefited on many occasions over the years from support in various kinds from local

businesses. Behind each of them stands an individual and a family who have made a local investment. Never was there a

better time to show them some support by shopping local.

The chancellor has made it even easier to do this through the Eat Out to Help Out scheme which runs every Monday – Wednesday during August. You'll get 50% of the price of eating out in participating cafes and restaurants, up to £10 per person. And you can do this as often as you like! Lots of local eateries have registered – you can find any within a five-mile radius from home by searching the HMRC website with your postcode.

Support our local businesses, they're the heart of our towns!

Take a Break

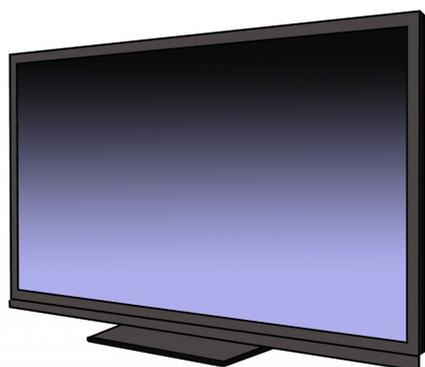
Can you figure out the well-known phrases using the clues?

Thanks to Committee member Sheila Linscer for supplying this puzzle.

Answers are given on the page 10 of the newsletter.

1 SAND	2 MAN BOARD	3 STAND T	4 READING
5 WEAR LONG	6 R ROADS A D S	7 ↓ T O W N	8 CYCLE CYCLE CYCLE
9 LE VEL	10 O M.D. PH.D. B.S.	11 KNEE LIGHTS	12 III I ○○
13 CHAIR	14 DICE DICE	15 H O U T ↓	16 GROUND FEET FEET FEET FEET
17 MIND MATTER	18 HE'S/HIMSELF	19 ECNALG	20 DEATH/LIFE
21 G.I. C C C C	22 — PROGRAM	23 (RECORDED	24 YOU JUST

TV Licence Fees for Over 75's Introduced



The BBC has gone ahead with its move to introduce TV licence fees for over 75s.

Delayed by two months due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the new scheme came into effect from 1 August 2020.

Only those over 75s who receive Pension Credit, or couples where one person receives Pension Credit, are exempt from the £157.50 annual fee.

“Covid-safe” payment systems mean that those affected can apply online or using a dedicated phone line.

TV Licensing will letter all over 75s with details on how to pay. Letters will be sent out from early August.

You need a TV licence if you

- watch/record LIVE television programmes on any channel, even if it's not the BBC
- use an online TV service to watch/stream programmes LIVE (e.g. STV Player, ITV Hub, All 4, YouTube, Amazon Prime Video, Now TV and SkyGo)
- use BBC iPlayer to Download/watch any BBC programmes

This applies to ANY device on which a programme in the above category is viewed, such as a TV, desktop or laptop computer, tablet/iPad, mobile phone, games console or set-top box.



How to check if you are eligible for Pension Credit

If you think you may be eligible for Pension Credit, but are unsure, this online benefits calculator is a useful tool.

<https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/benefit-calculator>

West Lothian Advice Shop can also give you information on Pension Credit, and on other benefits.

Telephone: 01506 283000

Email:

advice.shop@westlothian.gov.uk

Website:

<https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/adviceshop>



Bus Pass Applications

If you've celebrated a big birthday during the last few months, congratulations!



Over sixty bus pass applications were suspended during lockdown, but if you have recently turned sixty you can now apply for this online. Applications for new over sixty bus passes should be made online at

<https://getyournec.scot/nec/>

Apps for Everything!

Brain training

As routines have stopped during lockdown it has sometimes been hard to keep track of what day of the week it is! For those who like to play games or puzzles to keep their minds' sharp, there are lots of versions that you can play on your phone that are worth trying out.

[Elevate](#), [Lumosity](#) and [Peak](#) are three of the most well-known brain training apps, but there are many more available from the App store or from Google Play store.

Also available on your phone are sudoku, logic puzzles, crossword puzzles, word games, solitaire and scrabble games – a perfect way to pass some time on a rainy day.



Creativity online

For our more creative members, there are also many options available on your smart device.

Popular colouring in apps such as [Happy Colour by Numbers](#), [Paint by Number](#) and [Colorfy](#) advertise themselves as being relaxing and fun. You can even share your artwork with friends. [Autodesk SketchBook](#) lets you draw, paint or sketch anywhere, anytime. At [Cross Stitch Club](#) you can virtually sew by number different designs – great to do with a cup of tea on a lazy afternoon.

For those of you missing our Hub jigsaw swaps, have you tried the [Jigsaw Puzzle Collection HD](#) for adults with over 10,000 jigsaws for you to complete online?

Scam Alert

Members of the public are being warned against a recent scam involving fraudsters posing as NHS contact tracers. Alerts have been issued in England and Wales following reports of bogus calls and messages asking for money for Coronavirus test kits.

In the scam, members of the public are contacted and advised they have come into contact with Coronavirus and that they need to self-isolate and take a test. The scammers will then ask for your address to send the test kit to, and bank details, to pay for the test kit.

People are being asked to be vigilant and remember that official NHS contact tracers will **never** ask for payment of any kind or for your bank details.

Genuine contact tracer calls will **never** ask you:

- ◆ To make any payment
- ◆ To give your bank details
- ◆ To buy anything at all
- ◆ For social media logins (yours or your contacts)
- ◆ For any of your Passwords or PINs
- ◆ To set up Passwords or PINs over the telephone
- ◆ To telephone a premium rate number (e.g. starting 09 or 087)
- ◆ To download any software on your device
- ◆ To hand over control of your device remotely
- ◆ To access any website that is not a government or NHS website



If in doubt, don't give your information out.

Stay Safe



As Scotland slowly emerges from lockdown we must embrace another new set of rules to live by in order to Stay Safe.

Masks

It is mandatory to wear a face covering or a mask in Scotland if you are using public transport, in a shop or in certain public buildings. There are exemptions for those with certain medical conditions and children under the age of five.

Masks required:

- shops
- estate agents
- beauty parlours
- aquariums & indoor zoos/farms
- indoor tourist, heritage or cultural site
- banks, building societies & credit unions
- cinemas
- community centres
- crematoriums & funeral directors premises
- libraries
- museums & galleries
- places of worship
- post offices
- storage & distribution facilities



You may choose to wear a face visor however you must also normally wear a face covering.

There are some circumstances when you need not wear a face covering:

- you have a health condition or you are disabled, including hidden disabilities
- to seek medical assistance
- to avoid injury, illness or escape the risk of harm
- you need to eat or drink
- you are taking medication
- you are communicating with someone else who relies on lip reading and facial expressions to communicate
- a relevant person, such as a police officer, asks you to remove your face covering

Transport

You must wear a mask or face covering (unless you are exempt) on buses, taxis, trains, trams, underground trains, ferries and airline services. This applies to open air train platforms and open air bus stops.

Only travel by public transport if necessary, and avoid peak times if you can.

Capacity on services will be reduced due to social distancing and timetable changes may also be in place – it's best to plan ahead and also leave a bit more time for your travel.

Many bus operators now offer mobile apps that let you see how busy nearby buses are to help you safely plan your journey.

What to Expect in Cafes, Pubs and Restaurants

Many cafes, pubs and restaurants in Scotland have reopened, subject to physical distancing rules.

Masks are not mandatory in these premises.

Many pubs will offer only table service.

You can expect to be asked to follow social distancing rules and give your contact details to staff. Advance booking may be required.

If you plan to eat/drink out, it's best to check the venue's requirements in advance.

Have you made your own mask? Please send in a photo for us to see.

Be Prepared For Changes

Covid-19 is affecting so many aspects of our lives. Here we outline some of the changes you may find when shopping or going to the hairdressers.

Shopping

Please look out for signage in shops to show you whether there are one-way systems in place for you to follow. Some shops have one door for entry and one door for exit. They may also limit the number of people allowed in the shop at one time.

When you enter the shop, you will likely be asked to clean your hands with the provided hand sanitiser.

Look out for information on how and where to queue once you are ready to pay for your purchases - many shops have marked out 2m distances.

It's important to note that many shops will only accept card payments, not cash payments, so don't get caught out.

Hairdressers

We've all been desperate to get back to the hairdressers, but it can be a bit overwhelming to know exactly what to do. It's best to telephone your hairdresser to find out what to expect, but

we've put together a few pointers below.

If you are hoping to visit the barber's, many have socially distanced queues outside the barber shop. Pick a day when it's dry and you aren't pushed for time, and remember your facemask.



Have a hairdresser appointment? You will likely be asked to show up very close to your allotted time. You may be asked to wait outside the shop until they are ready for you.

You should wear a facemask or face covering which you will need to keep on throughout your appointment.

Try to take as few belongings with you as possible.

You will be instructed where to wait inside and given any further equipment to wear such as disposable apron. Or, if you are a regular, you may be asked to rent your own gown.



One-way systems may be in place to navigate around the hairdresser's premises, so follow instructions from staff.

Not every hairdresser will accept cash as payment, so be

prepared to pay by card if need be.

If you like to give a cash tip, it might be worth checking in advance whether that would be appropriate.

Good luck!

Take a Break

Answers Well done to those of you who have figured this out!

1. *Sandbox*
2. *Man overboard*
3. *I understand*
4. *Reading between the lines*
5. *Long underwear*
6. *Crossroads*
7. *Downtown*
8. *Tricycle*
9. *Split level*
10. *3 degrees below zero*
11. *Neon lights*
12. *Circles under the eyes*
13. *Highchair*
14. *Paradise*
15. *Touch down*
16. *5 feet underground*
17. *Mind over matter*
18. *He's beside himself*
19. *Backwards glance*
20. *Life after death*
21. *Soldier posted overseas*
22. *Space program*
23. *See-through blouse*
24. *Just between you and me*



Health and Wellbeing

In these uncertain times, the one thing we can be sure of is that things are a little different for everyone. Whether it's a change in routine, not being able to see friends or loved ones as often as we would like, feeling lonely or isolated - or just plain bored - we all may sometimes need a little extra help. Below are just a few organisations who may be able to give that practical help and support.

Advice Shop

Practical advice on benefits, debt and energy in challenging financial times. Online referral form available through website. No face to face appointments due to current circumstances.

Telephone: 01506 283000

Email:

advice.shop@westlothian.gov.uk

<https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/adviceshop>

Age Scotland

Age Scotland will listen and provide friendship and support.

Friendship Line: 0800 12 44 222

Monday-Friday 9am-5pm

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/>

Anxiety UK

Help for all types of anxiety and stress, including Coronanxiety support and resources.

Helpline 03444 775774 (Monday - Friday 10am -10pm, Saturday & Sunday 10am - 8pm)

www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care

Helpful support and resources on bereavement. Also specific section on Coronavirus help.

Cruse Bereavement Care (cont.)

Main Helpline: 0808 808 1677

Monday & Friday 9.30am - 5pm

Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 9.30am - 8pm

Saturday & Sunday 10am - 2pm

CruseChat is available (online text chat)

Monday - Friday 9am - 9pm

www.cruse.org.uk

Samaritans

If you need support for yourself, or if you are worried about a loved one, the Samaritans are there for you 24 hours a day.

Helpline: 116 123 (24/7)

Email: jo@samaritans.org

<https://www.samaritans.org/?nation=scotland>

Research for Coronavirus

Did you know, you can sign up to be contacted about taking part in approved UK Coronavirus vaccine studies?

This may not be for you, but perhaps someone you know will think about volunteering to take part in the ongoing research for a Coronavirus vaccine.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/research/coronavirus-vaccine-research/>

How are you feeling, really?

Since lockdown, we have been more interested than ever to hear how our members have been getting on. It's been good to talk, so please do give us a call if you feel like a chat or we can help with anything.

We hear from you that this time has been difficult. Many of you have adapted to a different way of living, but it's not been easy. Everyday tasks somehow seem so much harder, and lockdown has opened the door to a lack of confidence in some. For those who have been shielding for months, re-emerging into a different seeming environment is a big ask and a big step.

Venturing to the shops needs to be thought through now. If the thought of going shopping is daunting, ask a friend or family member to go along with you, at least for the first couple of times. Learning the new rules of shopping can be quite unsettling. If you find yourself getting wound up by it all, try to take a moment to stop and breathe calmly. Ask a shop assistant for help: ask where to queue or what checkout to use. Or ask them to look after your shopping trolley if you need to pop outside for five minutes for some air. It's as important to look after yourself as it is to get your weekly shopping.



We've heard from members who have felt isolated, particularly in early lockdown. Many of you dearly missed family and friends whilst following guidelines and protecting your health. Sacrifices that none of us wanted to make but that members have bravely done. Battling with loneliness, where perhaps family members are ill or failing and not able to offer support, or where family visits were sporadic at best. Some of you were truly thankful for phone calls, and keeping in touch remotely, a link to the outside world. We've heard how things are a bit better with lockdown easing, but also how one worry may be replaced by other fears and anxiety.

We know of death, sickness and mental illness at this time. Sometimes there are no words and there seems no way to offer comfort other than by listening, but please know that our kind thoughts are always with you. The days when things were tough... it's been a privilege to share these moments with you.

We know of members who have gone out of their way to help others in more isolated situations by visiting using social distancing or reaching out by phone. Many members have rejoiced in having a garden or outside space, and worried about those who don't. So many have said "we could be worse off", a true war mentality.

Some of you have talked to us about the change in what you feel comfortable doing now. Everyone must follow current government guidelines, and many of you cannot see when you would be happy in the future to resume some of the activities you used to do that are now not possible. When the situation changes, we will all need to look to government guidance and within ourselves to see what personal choices we should make. Everyone is entitled and right to make their own informed choice to protect their health and well-being, and WL50+ Network will support their members to do this.

What is true is that Coronavirus and lockdown has affected us all in some way and will likely continue to until there is an effective vaccine to combat the virus. The steps we can take against it are measured and will look different for each of us in our different situations. Getting back to normal maybe is not on the cards for now. For the meantime, the WL50+ Network welcomes the chance to move forward together with its members in the best way possible.

The Great Outdoors

Thank goodness it's possible now to travel more than five miles for leisure purposes! As we start getting out and about again, the Committee have pulled together some thoughts on where you might like to venture, locally as well as slightly further afield.

If you are looking for a flat, local walk, there's nothing quite like a stroll around **Linlithgow Loch**. Around two miles in distance, with the Palace as a great backdrop, we can recommend this accessible walk. There's no reason not to finish it off with a coffee on the historic High Street.

Also close to home is **Beecraigs**, offering walks and wildlife. With its marked walking routes, and open visitor café, head for the hills on a clear day. Beecraigs is always a popular destination and has been busy over the summer weeks, but with pupils back at school in West Lothian, there should be less congestion in car parks and at the visitor centre.

Almondell and Calderwood Country Park, another local treasure, is nestled between Broxburn and East Calder. A natural woodland that houses deer, foxes, herons, woodpeckers, squirrels and mice, it even has a coffee van on sunny days - and the loos are now open again!

Muiravonside Country Park is situated just outwith West Lothian at Whitecross. A short journey in the car and you can enjoy a wander around Newport Farm, which has sanitising and social distancing measures in place. There's a play area and walks alongside the River Avon to enjoy. In fact, the John Muir way passes close by and can be accessed by following the wooden stairs up to the top of the imposing aqueduct. At the moment toilet facilities are closed, as is the café, although during July a snack van selling ice creams was on hand in the car park. Visiting is free, however there is a £1 charge for parking and you are asked for a donation to support Newport Farm. It's well worth a visit, especially with any younger family members.

If you are a bit of a foodie, why not take a trip to **Craigie's Farm** in South Queensferry? Some Committee members popped here a few weeks ago and had a great day. The shop is open for business; you are asked to hand wash before entry and follow the social distancing measures in place. The café is currently closed but there is a food truck in operation in the car park, so you won't go hungry. The Pick Your Own fruit service is available too by purchasing your time slot in advance.



The Kelpies sculptures and **Helix Park** are located between Falkirk and Grangemouth. The park has 500km of connected cycle paths and walkways, including routes that take you from the Helix to The Falkirk Wheel and back. Remember, if going by your own car, you can park at the football stadium, as visitor car parks can be busy. A nice short walk takes you from the Helix Park to the Kelpies and Visitor Centre which goes through marshlands and along the banks of the canal. You will find ice cream and coffee vans but there are no toilet facilities open currently. Wood-fired pizzas were also on sale the last time we visited if you are feeling a bit peckish!



Stephen Reid and Billy Cunningham enjoying a trip to South Queensferry with Jim Dixon.

The Great Outdoors cont'd

Further afield, the **Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh** are located just a mile from the city centre and to visit you will need to book a time slot ticket in advance. Entry is still free to the gardens but numbers are limited and you are asked to bring a face covering with you. With over 70 acres of land, 10 Glasshouses (entrance charge) and 100,000 plants, this is a lovely day trip to Edinburgh.

If you fancy a trip to Fife, **Pittencreiff Park** in Dunfermline is worth a visit. Packed with wildlife, this park is near Dunfermline Abbey and accessible from the town centre. The ideal spot for a leisurely stroll with many pathways and gardens. Toilet facilities are currently open.

Palace Gardens, Culross has recently been enjoyed by Committee members. Six miles from Dunfermline, the gardens have great views of the Firth of Forth. The historic main garden has an interesting range of plants and there is also an orchard to explore. Betty's café at the side of the Palace is serving coffees and scones and is where you'll find the toilets.

It will take you about forty minutes' drive in good traffic to get to **Dalkeith Country Park**, but it's worth it. A sprawling Country Park in Midlothian, with opening hours 7am - 7pm and lots of parking. There's no charge to access the park or the Restoration Yard area which hosts a boutique shop, café, restaurant and toilets (open). If you fancy a ramble, there are walking routes from 2km to 8km, and the Palace Field grass area is perfect for a picnic. Additionally, if you are visiting with children, you have the option booking Fort Douglas (a woodland adventure park), but this separate priced area is easily avoided if you are looking for a more tranquil experience.

Jupiter Artland is situated at Wilkieston, Edinburgh. Pre-book your slot and enjoy the outdoor contemporary art set across 125 acres. There's outdoor seating available and toilets are open for visitors. A café and a coffee van sell takeaway snacks, treats and drinks - please bring a contactless debit or credit card as cash is not currently accepted at the popular attraction.

Dial-a Ride Service Resumes

HcL (Handicabs Lothian) Dial-A-Ride provide a useful door through door transport service for people of any age who have mobility challenges.

Offering a little extra support, your driver will assist you from your home into the vehicle and then from your vehicle to your destination.

Dial-A-Ride may be of help to you if you have mobility issues and

- are elderly or disabled
- have additional support needs or a health condition

- live in a remote location

Dial-A-Ride resumed its full service on Monday 20 July 2020.

Up to four members of the same household can be transported (including carer) anywhere in the Lothians for the normal fare structure. You can get a discount of £6 for your first trip.

If you fancy a day trip (like those above or on the last page) but can't manage to get there by public transport or by car, this useful service could be a good option for you.

Please note that you must first register to use this service.

To register online, visit www.hcltransport.org.uk/register

To make a booking, or request a paper registration form, please call the West Lothian office on 01506 633953

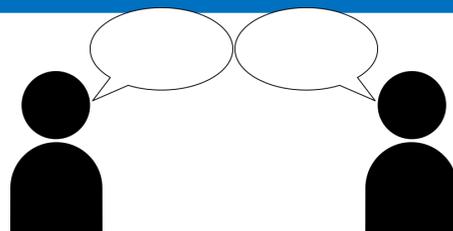
More information is available online at www.hcltransport.org.uk

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Keeping In Touch With Our Groups



Our Development Officer Tracy has been in contact with group leaders to find out how they are keeping in touch with their members. Thank you to all who replied.

The responses have shown they are using a wide variety of method including with many using email, phone, Zoom and Whatsapp as well as the previously mentioned Facebook pages. One of our group leaders has even been writing letters. For example:

Dawdlers, **Genealogy** and **Weekenders** members are contacted regularly by email by group leaders.

Weekenders also have an online calendar of events which is sent not only to the members of the group but also to Alan Dungavel's other groups, **Dawdlers** and **Genealogy**. Alan has also offered assistance to members who would like to continue their **Genealogy** research at home.

A number of groups are regularly using Zoom to virtually meet. **Pilates** and **Tai Chi** classes are being delivered by Zoom, as are **Craft for Enjoyment** craft sessions. **Happy Wanderers**, **Ukelele** and **Network Singers** also all meet regularly using Zoom.

Alex Aitken has been keeping the **French** group going by sending weekly emails to his **French** students with lessons and puzzles for homework.

Eleanor Shaw has been keeping in touch with her **Theatre/Cinema** group by email and sending details of online events, as well as organising refunds for the group which are all now complete.

Margaret Tenant has been keeping in touch regularly with members of the **Stroll Along** group by phone.

Good News for Theatre/Cinema Group



It's showtime....Bathgate Cinema and Vue Cinema (Livingston) open their doors again to the public for screenings from Friday 21 August.

We are holding a raffle!

We are delighted to announce that we are holding a remote raffle for Network Members.

Raffle Prizes Include: Chocolates *
Biscuits * A bottle of something nice...

We will use your membership number as your raffle number and draw the raffle by randomly generating the numbers - so you don't need to do anything to take part.

We will be in touch if you are one of the lucky winners. Results will also be publicised on Facebook and in the next newsletter.

West Lothian 50+ Network

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Phone: 01506 635510
Email: Hub@westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk
Website: www.westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk

Goodbye for now...

That's all for now, but we hope to be in touch again soon with more news.
Let us know what you've been getting up to and we can share with the other West Lothian 50+ Network members.