

Network News

April 2021



Network “Best Medicine” for Over 50s

There’s a new trend in “social prescribing” - referring patients to social activities to improve wellbeing and reduce demand on health services.

It’s particularly pertinent to older people, where social isolation – loneliness - has been linked to very adverse health effects.

Social prescribing, also sometimes known as community referral, is when health professionals refer patients to support in the community, in order to improve their health and wellbeing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has particularly highlighted the importance of being outdoors to people’s mental and physical health and so for some people “green social prescribing” aims to link them to nature-based interventions and activities, such as local walking for health schemes, community gardening and food growing projects.

Whilst not using the term itself, the West Lothian 50+ Network has understood about social prescribing for the last 26 or so years, and continues to administer their prescription for activity, companionship and fun.

The Network now has over 400 members and some of its founders are still going strong, passing on the baton to younger members who are introducing new ideas whilst maintaining the principle of



Members Elizabeth Florence (l) and Mary Ferrie at a pre-Covid tree planting event

“making things happen for ourselves.”

Now over 50 interest groups are on offer, with new groups being added all the time. The number of walking groups has now grown to seven, and a third language group has recently been introduced, adding Spanish to the existing French and Italian language classes, to cater for our many members who love to travel.

The Network helps to give a sense of purpose, often called into question after retirement, bereavement or when families spread their wings. Through

activities which keep mind and body active, there’s the chance to meet a new network of friends and companions. Members have called the organisation a “life saver”, especially after the loss of a partner, a close friend, or as a newcomer to the area.

There’s an over-riding determination to enjoy oneself and enjoy good company that permeates most of the West Lothian 50+ Network’s activities. It might be explained by the organisation’s motto: “Make the rest of your life the best of your life”. Members seem determined to do just that.

Plans for Activity Centre in doubt

Disappointing news this month as plans to make premises at George Place, Bathgate into our new Activity Centre fall into doubt.

With a question mark over which of our usual venues for group activities would still be available to us as restrictions begin to ease, the Network felt that it was important to have a space that we could safely manage with the correct Covid protocols, and which would be for our exclusive use.

After being empty for over two years, an arrangement was made with the George Place building owners, Scotmid, for the Network to have use of the space, but this was dependent on the premises remaining on the market for commercial let.

We heard towards the end of March that there is now interest from a business in the premises, and that a planning application has subsequently been lodged with West Lothian Council.

At the time of writing, we are unclear what the outcome will be, and the time-scales involved. We may still have the opportunity to have some use of the premises for returning groups, and will liaise with group leaders if this still remains a possibility, albeit perhaps in the short term.

We do however anticipate that alternative arrangements may have to be made and are therefore actively pursuing

other Bathgate town centre options.

Looking on the bright side, we had an ideal space in which to assemble our Christmas gift bags in December. And the Network's name over the shop and the treatment of the shop windows has given us great visibility in the town centre over the last three months, proving to be an excellent way to raise the our profile in the local community.

Hub set to reopen

With significant reopening of the economy and society planned by the Scottish Government from 26 April, this has also been set as the target date for the reopening of our Members' Hub at Linbar House.

Whilst some members may still be cautious about venturing out, others are keen for things to begin to get back to normal, and a careful reopening of the Hub will be the Network's first step in this direction.

By this time, data allowing, all shops should be open again, as well as libraries, galleries and museums, gyms and swimming pools and tourist accommodation. However social mixing in indoor public places at this time will be subject to current maximum of 4 people from up to 2 households so indoor groups will still not yet be possible. In fact, it's not until early June that up to 6 people from up to 3 households will be permitted to socialise indoors in a home or public place, so there's still a way to go for our groups.

Convenor's Foreword

I hope you've all been enjoying the recent warm weather. It's amazing how a bit of sunshine, and the sight of Spring flowers coming through can lift the spirits. I'm sure we're all feeling more optimistic now that we've had our first, and some even their second, Covid vaccination.

By the time you read this, our hair-dressers will have re-opened to our great relief, and a few more of our shops and libraries. Our team at the Hub are preparing to work in the Hub, rather than at home, and will be looking forward to seeing many of you again in person from 26th April.

It was a blow to hear that we're likely to lose the premises at George Place for our Activity Centre, but we were on the case immediately to find an alternative solution. We'll keep you posted as soon as we have some concrete news.

Once again we have been fortunate to gain more funding (see page 11), not least that which has allowed us to recruit our new Change Manager. We are delighted to welcome Fiona Cochrane, who joined us in March.

I do hope you've all been keeping safe,

*Anne Webster,
Convenor*



Introducing Our New Change Manager

Next time you pop into the Hub, you'll find a new face. Meet Fiona Cochrane who has recently joined the team.

I am delighted to join the Network as Change Manager to help support the Committee, Hub team and the Network as a whole.

Some of you may recognise me from the two talks my daughter, Alex, did for the Network about her experience with The Polar Academy as part of the team from Bathgate Academy in 2019. You may also know me as past committee member, Barbara Haddow's daughter. In one way or another, I have been dipping in and out of the splendid work that the Network does over the last few years, so I suppose that it is not a surprise that I felt that working for the Network would be a great fit for me.

My new role will help the Network to manage its way safely through the pandemic and supervise the existing three members of staff.

Reporting into the Committee, I will be the liaison for the day-to-day running of our premises and ensuring that we meet (or exceed) the expectations of the many funders who currently support the Network.

I have spent the last 20 or so years working in a variety of retail businesses heading up the marketing and communications departments. Lockdown 2020 brought me time for reflection and a bit of soul searching when I was made redundant from my role at Tiso, the Scottish outdoor specialist. Did I want to continue on a treadmill of the never-ending commute, long hours, and limited family time over weekends only? I realised that it was time for a change!

Having spent most of my youth in South Africa, where I met and married my husband, Stuart, I love relaxing in the outdoors. We love going on walks with our Beagle, Honey (who has lost almost all of her colour and often gets mistaken as a Labrador puppy!) and enjoy



active holidays where we can take in local pursuits. Like most people, we are keen to get back to enjoying all Scotland has to offer and look forward to the end of restrictions.

Stay safe and I look forward to meeting you in the Hub when we can all meet up again.

We are grateful to the Scottish Government's Adapt and Thrive Fund and to West Lothian Council for their Third Sector Community Support Fund 21/22, which together fully fund Fiona's post for a 12 month period.



My daughter, Alex and I enjoying ourselves outdoors during our second lockdown



My mum, Barbara Haddow and daughter, Alex



The family Beagle, Honey

West Lothian's Lost Villages

West Lothian had about twenty lost villages – villages which grew up in the period 1855-1910, mostly for housing the workforce of a particular mine or oil works, and which were eventually abandoned and demolished. Local historian Sybil Cavanagh tells their story.

Some villages were quite remote: East Benhar was on the moors between Fauldhouse and Harthill; and South Cobbinshaw, by Cobbinshaw Reservoir south of West Calder, was even more isolated, but developed into a substantial village with a school, a church and a railway station. Others were hamlets built on the outskirts of existing towns: Niddry was about half a mile from Winchburgh, and Durhamtoun was just as close to Bathgate. The largest lost village was Oakbank, near East Calder, with a population at its height of well over 1,000. A school opened in 1901, and there were several shops, a bowling green, a football pitch, an Institute Hall and various clubs – no pub however, the mining companies would never provide a pub.

Mossend was built in the 1860s to house the shale miners who supplied the huge Addiewell Oil Works. By 1871 there were 141 houses, and several shops. Its rows were rare in being painted: 'the gables are blackened with tar, while the fronts and backs of the houses are white-washed'. Its three streets were built in a triangular layout – Front Street, Mid Street and East Street. The village's football team, famed in the 1890s and 1900s, the Mossend Swifts, must have been drawing players from all the surrounding villages as it was very successful, drawing with Celtic in 1888 – though I have to add that this was just a few weeks after Celtic was founded! By the 1930s, Scottish Oils had made many improvements to the houses, giving all of them running



Oakbank, looking west towards the bing. Early 1900s.

Credit: West Lothian Local History Library

water, a toilet, bath and scullery.

The neighbouring village of Gavieside was smaller, but managed to sustain its own Co-operative Society from 1873 till 1930. Gavieside was demolished in the late 1930s, Mossend in the 1960s and '70s, and the residents re-housed in council houses in Polbeth – a new village built for the people being displaced from various miners' rows and villages.

Westerton was built in 1883-85 to accommodate the miners at Newliston shale mine, just east of the Arches, and it comprised 41 houses built in three rows, with an average of six people in each house, which comprised just a room and kitchen. The only community facility was a reading room and hall, for which 1½d was deducted from the weekly wage. The school, built about

half a mile to the west, survives as the Astor Motel. By 1958, Newliston shale mine had closed down, most of the houses were 'uninhabitable', and the few remaining tenants were in 'a pitiable plight regarding their chances of being re-housed in the near future... The village is infested by rats.' The houses were demolished in 1960, the site reverted to a field, and now you would never know there had been a village there.

The village of Kingscavil was built by the Linlithgow Oil Company in 1885 for the workers employed at their oil works at Bridgend and its associated shale mines. Some 114 houses in three rows were built behind Kingscavil church. As in most of the mining villages, the houses were

allowed to fall well behind modern standards. To get government housing grants in the 1930s, the Council had to designate houses a slum clearance area, knock them down and build new council houses. There was no money available for large-scale renovation. In the early 1930s, new council houses were built in Bridgend, and Kingscavil's rows were demolished.

Life was not always grim in these lost villages. Some old people still have happy memories of growing up there: the friendliness and security of village life, a country childhood, the strength of community ties. Is it a matter of regret that these villages have been lost? What do you think?

West Lothian's lost villages (shows number of houses in 1917)

Camps, by East Calder (20?)

Mossend (140)

Cappers (30)

Niddry (96)

Deans & Starlaw (66)

North Cobbinshaw

Durhamtoun (73)

Oakbank (165)

East Benhar (105)

Paulville (67)

Gavieside (92)

South Cobbinshaw (50?)

Hermand Rows

Starlaw (30)

Kingscavil (128)

Westerton (41)

Levenseat

Woodend (64)

Mid Breich (44)

Woodmuir & Blinkbonny

Guest Speakers on Zoom

February

Susan Douglas: The Douglas Method

On 25th February members joined Susan Douglas, a health practitioner who helps chronic pain sufferers reduce pain so that they can enjoy life again.

Susan helps alleviate pain and discomfort in many conditions including - but not limited to - Osteoporosis, Fibromyalgia, Frozen Shoulder, Chronic Pain, MS, Arthritis, Joint Hypermobility Syndrome, Sciatica, Back Pain and Joint Pain, Rehabilitation and many others.

She uses a fundamental system which incorporates The ACE Protocol to Analyse the root cause, Correct and Stop re-occurrence.

March

Sybil Cavanagh : The Lost Villages of West Lothian

Some of you may remember Sybil Cavanagh when she was a Local History Librarian with West Lothian Libraries - for 26 years! Her talk on 25th March on the Lost Villages of West Lothian revealed that there were a surprising number - about twenty - mainly mining communities, some of them quite large, with over 1,000 inhabitants. Some were on the outskirts of towns, others were isolated and lonely. They grew, flourished

and then vanished in the course of less than 100 years – between 1850 and 1950 .

In her talk, well illustrated with old photos, Sybil told us a little about these villages - why they were built, what life was like there, why they disappeared; and told some of the stories associated with the villages.

Those that missed the talk can read all about the lost villages in Sybil's article opposite.

April

Linlithgow Gin

Linlithgow Gin is a local hand-crafted small batch gin distillery. They have agreed to do a talk for us at 1pm on 22 April 2021. It will include an introduction to who they are, a brief overview of their products, a walk-through tour of the still room and bottling area and then an opportunity to ask questions. Anyone who joins the talk will receive a 10% discount code on all products which can be used within 24 hours. Contact the Hub for the link to the meeting.



Walking Awards

A new walking awards scheme aims to recognise individuals and organisations which are making significant impacts on transforming Scotland into a walking nation.

The Scottish Walking Awards were launched in February this year by Paths for All, together with Ramblers Scotland, Living Streets Scotland and the National Walking Strategy Delivery Forum.

The Network has submitted a nomination under the Community Champion category for the 50 Plus Network.

Led walks are one of the Network's most popular activities with some 148 members belonging to one of the seven groups on offer, 34% of the total membership. As well as improving fitness, the weekly walks provide fantastic opportunities for social interaction with lots of chat along the way, and, in normal circumstances, a refreshment stop at the end. The less able take short walks closer

to home, whilst others use public transport to travel further afield and discover new places. Annual walking days have brought together members of all seven groups, and walking holidays abroad have also been organised. Though activity has been somewhat curtailed during the current pandemic, the walking groups have provided a framework for peer support, with members walking close to home in smaller groups, or even pairs to keep within the guidelines. Some have been sharing routes, one group has maintained contact through a dedicated facebook page, whilst another has kept in touch through regular Zoom meetings. The group leaders have jointly agreed guidelines for future walking once the current restrictions have been lifted.

The awards are now closed to new nominations and the winners will be announced in May as part of National Walking Month. Fingers crossed!

Walking Groups

Returning

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 to a maximum of 15 participants.

Group walks require group registers, risk assessments and social distancing. Booking systems are also required, and walks should still be within our own local authority area. Car sharing remains off limits.

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.

Jigsaw and Book Swaps

Are you looking for new books or a jigsaw?

Look out the ones you have finished with and bring them into the Hub when we re-open on 26th April.

Hopefully you'll find something new to swap them with.



March Remote Raffle Prize Winners

Our remote raffle is back! It's a great chance to get out to see some of our members at home as we deliver prizes to our lucky winners. This time some of you got the chance to meet our new manager Fiona, who volunteered with Tracy for this month's delivery run.



Our March winners, membership numbers and prizes are as follows:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Catherine Paterson (127) Chocolates | Anne Speirs (272) Wine |
| Jeff Martin (347) Captain Morgan's | Kathleen Shields (91) Wine |
| Sheila Scott (164) Liqueur Chocolates | Marion McLaughlin (152) Sparkling wine |
| Margaret Hamilton (482) Wine | Pauline Bradley (99) Wine |
| Keith Wilson (334) Wine | Agnes Keenan (25) Wine |

Retiring Committee Members

Two members of the Committee will stand down at our AGM this year.

Sheila Linscer and Lesley Martin, who have served 4 and 7 years respectively will step down 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.

We thank them all for their valuable contributions.



Sheila Linscer



Lesley Martin

Weekly email bulletin

We've recently introduced a weekly bulletin for our members on email.

We receive a number of emails and information from partner organisations that we think may be of interest.

Rather than send out several emails, we're including this information, along

with a round-up of our upcoming events, in one handy email.

If you've recently changed or acquired an email address, please let the Hub know.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

We asked for your mandate to postpone our 2020 AGM until 2021.

We received only one objection to this and so our Annual General meeting was postponed.

It will now take 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 current situation, at the time of writing still in full lockdown, we are

now planning to hold this meeting on the Zoom online.

All members are welcome though we appreciate that this will exclude those who are not online, but we can find no other way to conduct this essential business for our organisation at the present time.

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.

New Committee Members Sought

We have had some notes of interest to join the Committee, and welcome others to come forward.

Please let us know where your interests lie, and what skills you could bring to help steer the direction of the Network.

Our Constitution states that you should have been a member for at least 12 months before serving on the Committee.

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

Scots Wummin – A Quiz

On March 8th we celebrated International Women's Day and in May we go to the polls again to elect our Members of the Scottish Parliament.

This quiz celebrates some of the brave Scots wimmen who've made a difference to the women's suffrage movement. Answers on page 15.

There are 3 choices but only one is the correct answer. Dinnae worry if ye pick the wrang yin, it's only a wee bit fun.

1. By what name was Scottish suffragette Flora Drummond known?
a) Captain b) The Major c) The General

2. Why was the 'Cat and Mouse Act in 1913' introduced?
a) Force feed women b) Re-arrest women c) Starve Women

3. Which War interrupted the women's suffrage movement?
a) First World War b) Korean War c) Second World War

4. What kind of campaign methods were used by The Women's Freedom League?
a) Arson Attacks b) Passive resistance c) Petitions

5. Which year were women over 30 granted the vote?
a) 1919 b) 1918 c) 1920

6. What colours did the Women's Social and Political Union wear?
a) Green, white, gold b) Red, white,

green c) Purple, white, green

7. In 2015 Mhairi Black was the youngest MP elected to the House of Commons, what age was she?
a) 21 b) 20 c) 22

8. What honorary role did Elsie Inglis hold in the Edinburgh National Society of Women's Suffrage?
a) Secretary b) Treasurer c) Chairwoman

9. What year was the voting age for women lowered to 21 the same as men?
a) 1930 b) 1928 c) 1919

10. In 1909 hundreds of suffragists from all over Scotland marched in a procession in which Scottish city?
a) Edinburgh b) Aberdeen c) Glasgow

Development Officer's Update

We may have been closed for the past year but our development officer Tracy has been busy working behind the scenes, making new contacts and developing new ideas to take forward when we come out of lockdown. Here's a flavour of some of the things she's been working on recently:

- Established a link with **Ability Net**, a useful contact for members who may be experiencing difficulties with technology;
- Requested the Network's details be added to the directory on **Westspace's** website and offered to speak at a wellbeing event planned by this West Lothian based mental health charity;
- Met with new service '**Improving the cancer journey**', a Macmillan and NHS partnership to be delivered by WLC Advice Shop. Sharing information about what we provide as a possible place to signpost people to;
- Attended an information and networking meeting with **Generations Working Together**;
- Discussions about a possible drama group with **Regal Reconnect**;
- Gave a talk about the Network to **Bathgate Rotary** who are keen to create a partnership and work together;
- Made contact with **Sight Scotland** – see page 12;

- Regular meetings with **West Lothian Voluntary Network** including looking at the options for a volunteer celebration;
- Liaising with **Co-op Choices** who have asked for a video and promotional picture and text to use on their social media/website and in stores.
- **Blackburn Choices Funding** Residents of Blackburn can vote for our funding bid for further Spanish classes to be held in Blackburn. A member raised a concern that our bid and the young at heart bid would be unfairly disadvantaged since many of the people who would vote for us may not know about it if they are not using the internet or technology to find out about it and because the only way to vote is online. The organizers are now looking to set up a telephone voting system and will include details in a paper-based Blackburn update;
- Worked with our fundraiser to put together a video for the **Almond Housing Community Soup** funding event. Was awarded for £1,050 for tools for a new gardening group;
- **Newsletter Distribution** – St John's Hospital, Generation Arts, Rosemount, Home Instead and the Food Train have now agreed to take and distribute our newsletters to their clients;
- Continued to set up monthly **Zoom Talks** in lieu of our usual members meetings.



Groups Update

New Local History Group

Following Sybil Cavanagh's excellent talk in March, she has indicated that she would be willing to lead a new group with a focus on local history if there is sufficient interest.

New Gardening Group

This could take a number of formats which we are keen to explore with members who are interested in gardens and gardening.

Italian

Italian classes are set to get up and running again in early April. Using Zoom, group leader John Walker aims to offer online classes to members of the Italian Beginners and Intermediate groups.

Spanish

Classes have now started and 10 members have paid for the first 6 week block, including one new member.

Zumba Gold (Online)

Our instructor is hopeful that we may be able to start in-person classes outside at some point, depending on the weather.

Contact the Hub for all group information.

Exploring Bathgate's Hills

As we start to come out of lockdown and gain the freedom to go that little further afield, don't overlook the gems that we have on our doorstep in the Bathgate Hills.

The hills' rich history, interesting features and proximity to the towns of Bathgate, Livingston and Linlithgow provide endless opportunities to enjoy meeting friends and family outdoors whilst not having to go too far from home.

Encompassing an area north of the M8 and the A89, and south of Linlithgow, between Dechmont in the east and Boghall and Bathgate in the west, the Bathgate hills also take in Torphichen, site of the 12th century stronghold of the Knights of St John and the well-loved Beecraigs Country Park.

Accessing the hills is easy via the Drumcross Road, where you'll find Raven Craig, a 54.5 hectare hilly woodland, used as a deer park from 1750-1805 by land-owner Lord Hopetoun and quarried in 1875 in vain efforts to unearth silver. Follow a series of footpaths up to the Bronze Age cairn for excellent views over the Forth and the Pentland Hills.

Just north of here you'll find Cairnpapple and the Knock, both sites



Enjoy a stroll around Beecraigs Loch

with significant archaeological history.

The Knock has always been popular for local walks and picnics. At 305 metres, this glacially sculpted crag and tail hill created by an outcrop of quartz-dolerite is about 305 million years old. It falls short of being the highest summit in these hills but is excellent viewpoint over Rosyth and the Forth bridges. The top can be reached from a minor road that skirts its western flank. Here you'll find a bronze disc indicator in memory of the Sutherland family who gifted four and a half acres of land to Bathgate Town Council.

The highest point in the Bathgate Hills is Cairnpapple, at 312 metres. An important prehistoric monument, Cairnpapple was used

as a burial and ceremonial site from about 3000 to 1400 BC, a once-sacred hilltop where people first held rituals and raised neolithic monuments some 5,500 years ago. You can visit a Neolithic henge, see the site of a great timber circle and descend into a Bronze Age cist grave (now covered by a modern, domed chamber).

On your way to Cairnpapple you'll pass the Hilderston Silver Mine Quarry, first in operation between 1606 and 1614. In 1608 German miners were brought in to work the deposits, indicating their skill and knowledge of mining geology at this time. The quarry re-opened in the 18th century to work lead and zinc and re-excavated during the 19th century, but no further economic deposits of silver or lead were found.

If you normally make a beeline to Beecraigs, a family favourite for its loch walks, deer sightings, playground and BBQ areas, why not stop off at the Witchcraig Woodland and Korean War Memorial along the way? This eight-hectare site combines a memorial garden and hilly, woodland with walking routes and excellent views.

Opened in June 2000 to mark the 50th anniversary of the war's commencement, 110 Korean Fir trees and around 1100 Scottish trees represent the servicemen who were killed in the conflict.

Follow the signpost behind the memorial to the Refuge Stone and Witchcraig Wall, an uphill walk with views across the Forth. You can rest at the Witchcraig Wall, a small enclosure with seating which exhibits the geological heritage and diversity of Central Scotland, with 43 rocks from the region integrated into the structure.

In the stone wall behind you'll find a 12th century Refuge Stone, etched with the Cross of Lorraine, one of a number of surviving boundary stones around Torphichen where the Knights of St John established a Preceptory in 1124.

The stones formed a one-mile circle around the Preceptory which was as much a sanctuary as the church itself, offering protection to any criminals who entered its precincts.

One of the best parts about getting out in the fresh air is finding a great place for refreshments afterwards. The Hideaway Café at Beecraigs has lots of outside seating and there's a great choice of eateries in Bathgate and Linlithgow.

Funding Update

More good news on the funding front! The Network has been awarded a further £5,000 from **West Lothian Council's Third Sector Community Support Fund 2021/22** towards our core costs.

We have also awarded £1,050 by **Almond Housing's "Community Soup Fund"**. Normally held as an event, where local groups have the chance to pitch for much-needed funding for their community group or project, this year things were a little different. Discovering unknown talents, Tracy and our fund raiser Laura created and submitted a short video requesting funds for equipment for a new gardening group.

Looking ahead to new potential funding sources, do any members work for, or know anyone who works for **Lloyds Banking Group (LBG) / Bank of Scotland**? Did you know that:

- For any fundraising a LBG employee does, the bank will match it to £500 which is an unrestricted donation;
- For any volunteering a LBG employee does, the bank will donate £8 per hour that their employee volunteers up to £500 to a charity of their choice which is also an unrestricted donation.



Information Zoom Sessions

We recently asked members for ideas for speakers that you would find of interest.

Subsequently a representative from West Lothian Council has been booked to do a Zoom session providing information and advice about the **new fire safety and smoke alarm rules**. This will be at 11am on Tuesday 13th April.

Contact the Hub for the link.

Sight Loss Support

The sight loss charity Sight Scotland has launched a new Family Wellbeing Service, including a freephone telephone helpline, providing support to people with sight loss and their families, carers and friends.

Individuals affected by sight loss, as well as carers, friends and families with a loved one affected by sight loss at any age or stage, can call the Sight Scotland Support Line on **0800 024 8973** to access the charity's expert advice, information and practical and emotional support.

The Sight Scotland Support Line is free to call and is open Monday to Friday, 10am – 12pm and 1pm – 3pm.

Through the Support Line, the Sight Scotland team can provide information and advice on a range of topics including emotional support and befriending; advice on a wide range of visual impairments; equipment, aids and home adaptations; benefits and financial support; maintaining independence; and how and where to get support in your local area.

Other features of Sight Scotland's Family Wellbeing Service include befriending, home visits (when Scottish Government restrictions allow) and online information and advice through their website sightscotland.org.uk

Colin Hilditch, Head of Community Services at Sight Scotland, said: "Sight loss has a huge impact on life, not only for the person with sight loss themselves, but also for their loved ones. Our research revealed a need for more advice and emotional support for the whole family to help them cope with the impact of their loved one's sight loss.

"We are proud to launch the new Sight Scotland Family Wellbeing Service and our new Sight Scotland Support Line to address this need for support. Our friendly team have extensive knowledge and experience to help each individual in any way for how sight loss is affecting them, and we hope people with sight loss and their families will reach out to us through our helpline for our expert advice and support."

Find out more:
sightscotland.org.uk/supportline

Email:
supportline@sightscotland.org.uk



Sight Scotland

Older People's Champion for West Lothian

West Lothian Council is to appoint its first ever Older People's Champion to improve life for older people and ensure they have a strong voice. The unpaid role involves identifying issues affecting local older people and standing up for their interests.

Nine councils in Scotland have already appointed Older People's Champions who have made significant changes, including pushing for better public transport and supporting older people's groups.

West Lothian has an aging population and is predicted to see a steep rise in the number of people aged 75 and over in the coming years, creating a greater need for a strong voice to stand up for them and ensure they can play a full part in the community.

Covid-19 has highlighted many older people struggling to cope with record levels of loneliness and isolation. As we move to a recovery, the Older People's Champion will work with local organisations such as the 50+ Network and ensure that the voice of older people is heard in the local decision making.

In other parts of Scotland, champions have already pushed for improvements from better public transport and toilet provision to supporting community groups and activities.

Cllr Chris Horne who led the creation of the role in the council said that he hoped it would challenge thinking to ensure the best for older communities, whilst also highlighting the good things that may be hidden, but available, for older people.

Talking Newspaper

Local charity West Lothian Boomerang received a much - needed funding boost last year to enable them to continue providing their talking newspaper service during the pandemic.

A number of 50+ members are amongst the volunteers who produce this talking newspaper for those who are blind, partially sighted or labouring under some temporary or permanent incapacity or disability which makes reading a strain, by the provision of a weekly recording of mainly local news. Players are provided free of charge and the West Lothian Courier is recorded onto memory sticks and posted out to our listeners. In addition you can also hear the latest recording by clicking on the episode player bars on their website.

Long-time listeners to West Lothian Boomerang will know that Boomerang started out using the good old compact tape, then, as this type of technology became obsolete, a few years ago we moved to USB memory sticks.

But technology never stands still and West Lothian Boomerang once again recognised the need to change with the times to ensure their audience get the very best service they can provide. They have now embarked on a programme to bring you their publication via a "Podcast" which is simply like a radio show that is available for download or playing on the internet



or via your smart speaker. You will also be able to listen to archive episodes on their website so no need to worry if you miss a week, you can always catch up.

West Lothian Boomerang have been fortunate over the last year or so with their fund-raising efforts and would like to acknowledge the contribution received from West Lothian Council, local councillors, listeners, the Round Table Linlithgow & Bo'ness, Rotary Livingston, Rotary Whitburn, Persimmon Homes, Howdens, Edinburgh University, Foundation Scotland, West Lothian Voluntary Sector Gateway and the Walker Family Trust. The funding has allowed them to completely remodel their studio to allow socially distanced recording so that they could continue to provide a service to their 60 or so listeners

during the pandemic. They were also able to purchase sufficient USB sticks and wallets to rotate these items and quarantine the sticks and wallets between uses.

West Lothian Boomerang is produced weekly with recording days on Thursdays and Fridays at a studio in Whitburn. New volunteers are welcome for a wide range of roles such as readers, technicians, duplication or distribution. Training will be given. If you know anyone who would be interested in receiving the recordings please make contact with their details.

Contact West Lothian Boomerang on:

Telephone number 07707830634

Email: wlboomerang.info@gmail.com

Website www.boomerang.co.uk

Network Calendar for 2022

A picture is worth a thousand words, as the saying goes, and so we'd like your help in telling the story of the 50+ Network and what it means to our members.

Whilst it may seem a little early to plan for 2022, we'd like to produce a calendar towards the end of the year that reflects the shared experiences, companionship and fun that the 50+ Network brings to our members.

During the course of the year, as we begin to be able to meet up once more, we'd love you to share your photos with us, with a view to them being considered for use in our 2022 Calendar.

Here's a few guidelines for submitting your photos:

- The photo(s) should show members of the 50+ Network involved in a Network activity
- Anyone can take part. You don't need to be a professional photographer – although we don't mind if you are;
- You may submit more than one photo. You may wish to submit several as you take part in different activities through the year.
- All photos must be submitted under an individual's name;
- Photos must be in digital format with .JPG or .PNG ending.
- To ensure the production of high-quality images in the calendar, photos should be at least 300 ppi or



1500 x 2100 (3.15MP) in size (if unsure we can advise);

- Please give each photo a title in the file name;
- Your name should be included in the file name, e.g. J Bloggs such and such Network group.jpg
- If sending more than one photo, please number them e.g. J Bloggs1..., J Bloggs2...etc.
- Photos should preferably be in colour;
- By submitting images you confirm that you are the copyright holder and creator of the image and that you will be responsible for any claims made by any third party;
- Copyright will remain with the photographer. However by submitting your photograph(s) the photographer agrees to the West Lothian 50+ Network using the images on social media and in a promotional calendar.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that all necessary permissions are obtained from any person featured in a photo, bearing in mind they may be used on social media.

All photographs should be submitted by the 31st October 2021.

Entries should be submitted as an email attachment to:

hub@westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk

If your image files are very large and you are submitting more than one photo, you may want to send them in more than one email.

Friends Remembered



We've heard that some members have been unwell or in hospital recently and send them our best wishes.

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 them a card.

Recipe Simnel Muffins

*A new twist on a traditional
Easter recipe*

Ingredients

250g mixed dried fruit
grated zest & juice 1 orange
175g softened butter
175g golden caster sugar
3 eggs, beaten
300g self-raising flour
1 tsp mixed spice
½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
5 tbsp milk
175g marzipan
200g icing sugar
2 tbsp orange juice for mixing
Mini eggs

Tip the fruit into a bowl, add zest and juice. Microwave on medium for 2 minutes (or leave to soak for 1 hour). Line 12 deep muffin tins with paper muffin cases.

Preheat oven to fan 180C/ 160C/gas 4. Beat together the butter, sugar, eggs, flour, spices and milk until light and fluffy. Stir the fruit in well.

Half fill the muffin cases with the mixture. Divide the marzipan into 12 equal pieces, roll into balls, then flatten with your thumb to the size of the muffin cases. Put one into each muffin case and spoon the rest of the mixture over it. Bake for 25-30 minutes, until risen, golden and firm to the touch. Leave to cool.

Beat together the icing sugar and orange juice to make icing thick enough to coat the back of a wooden spoon. Drizzle over the muffins and top with a cluster of eggs. Leave to set. Best eaten within a day of making.



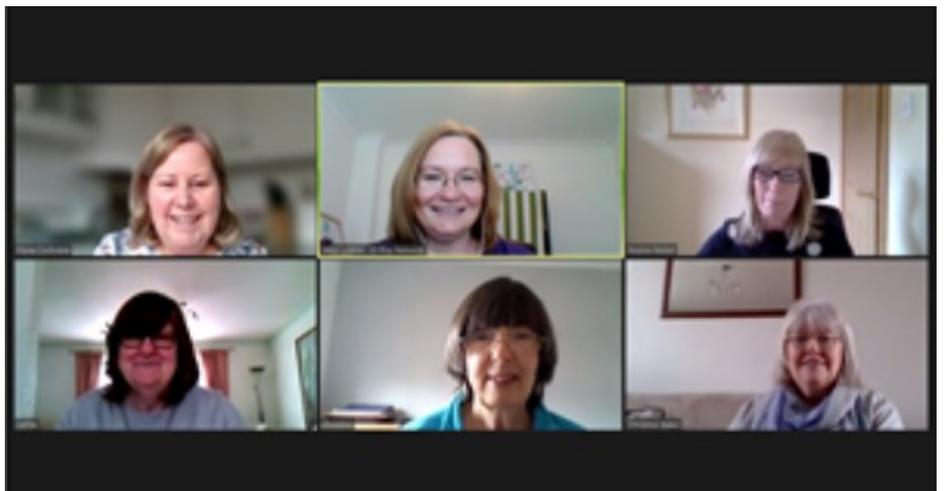
Quiz Answers

1. (c) The General
2. (b) Re-arrest
3. (a) First World War
4. (b) Passive resistance (refusing to pay tax)
5. (b) 1918
6. (c) Purple, white, green
7. (b) 20 years
8. (a) Secretary
9. (b) 1928
10. (a) Edinburgh

New Members Meetings

Despite most of our activities being curtailed this year, the 50+ Network has still been attracting new members. At the end of March our development officer Tracy held a virtual meeting for our new members.

The ladies have decided to meet up weekly to stay in touch and will be meeting on a Thursday after the Easter break on Zoom. If any other



new (or even longer standing) members would like to join in, please contact the Hub for details.

New members enjoy a chat on Zoom in a recent "getting to know you" session



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.

Membership Fees for 2021

A reminder that your membership fee for 2021 became due on 1st April.

Because we had to pause most of our activities last year we are asking you to renew at half the normal membership fee - just £10.

There are a number of ways in which you can make a payment including by bank transfer, over the phone card payment or cheque, whichever is easiest for you. Cheques are payable to "West Lothian 50+ Network". For bank transfers use:

Bank of Scotland, Bathgate Branch

Sort Code 80 05 56, Account No 06002755.

Please use your name as a reference.

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

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

Contact West Lothian 50+ Network

Unit 48 G Linbar House

North Bridge Street

Bathgate

EH48 4PP

Phone: 01506 635510

Email: hub@westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk

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

Website: www.westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk

Make the rest of your life the best of your life