

Network News

December 2022



Walking in North Berwick



Coach Trips



Funding Awards



Network's 600th Member

View from the Chair



Network Chair Anne Webster

As the year draws to a close, we look forward to a time of celebration with our friends and families.

After a long gap, we are finally able to gather together again for our Christmas party, as well as for our annual Christmas concert from the Network Singers. We're also bringing back the Leaders' Lunch in January, a special occasion to thank all the volunteers who lead our groups.

It's also a time for reflection, to look back on the year past, as well as make plans for the year to come.

After a two year gap, we're once again seeking your views on Network activities through our Members' Survey. You should already have received a link to the online survey in an email, or received your copy through the post, so if you haven't seen it yet, please get in touch with the Hub as we are keen for as many members as possible to make their voice heard.

It really does help to provide guidance to the Trustees in taking the Network forward.

Once again this year we have been fortunate to have widespread endorsement of the Network's

activities. In particular we were pleased to be recognised by Age Scotland, receiving a Highly Commended certificate for Services for Older People.

Often endorsement takes the form of a financial contribution from corporate funders and charitable trusts. It's particularly gratifying to have endorsement from our own community, with contributions from outlets like the Co-op, and, most recently, the Original Factory Shop in Bathgate.

We're also pleased to have had the chance to do our bit for others. This year, as well raising funds for Ukraine, members have given generously to a number of local charities after learning more about them from guest speakers at our monthly members' meetings.

Key to the Network's success is the many interest groups run by members for members. Our activity groups now number over 60, and we're adding new groups all the time - most recently creative writing and classic cinema - giving you a fantastic range of activities with something for everyone.

Our monthly coach trips continue to be popular - some 552 bookings were taken for day trips with the Network this year - and that doesn't include those organised within groups such as Weekenders, NuYu and our Theatre group. We know, where possible that you like to get out and about, and the importance to our members of the travel concession card was certainly something we raised at our recent meeting with West Lothian Council's Older People's Champion, Anne McMillan. She is your contact at the Council if there are issues affecting older people that you want to bring forward.

All that remains is to wish you and yours all the very best for the coming festive season and for 2023.

Anne Webster, Chair

Funding Update

We are grateful to a number of supporters who are helping us to run our Network.

Most recently these include:

The **Basil Death Trust** awarded £3,000 towards our Hub Co-ordinators' salaries

The **National Lottery Community Fund - Awards for All** awarded £10,000 towards our Manager's salary, rent and printing, stationery and postage

Hugh Fraser Foundation awarded £3,000 per year towards our Hub Co-ordinators' salaries for the next 3 years, total award £9,000

West Lothian Councillors' Disbursements 2022-2023 - a number of Councillors have awarded us funding from their Disbursement funds to help with the running costs of the Hub for the winter months and the increased utility costs. We have received £1,325

West Lothian Council Pensioners Christmas Fund awarded £2,892.79

Allen Lane Foundation awarded £5,000 towards our Hub Co-ordinators' salaries

The **Lady Marian Gibson Trust** awarded £2,000 towards the running costs of the activity space at the hub.

The final amount paid out by the **Co-op Community Fund** was £1,009.78

THANK YOU
to all of our sponsors!

Co-op's Local Community Funds

Network trustees Anne and Sue were at the Co-op in Whitburn at the beginning of November to accept a cheque for £1,009.78 on behalf of the Network.

We are very grateful to the Co-op's **Local Community Fund** which nominated the Network as one of its three local causes for the period 24 October 2021 - 22 October 2022.

Well done also to West Lothian Litter Pickers and Whitburn Community Development Trust's Community Fridge, the other two local recipients this year, who do fantastic work in the local area.

Thanks to everyone who supported us through their Co-op membership - as a Co-op member when you buy selected Co-op products and services, 2p for every £1 you spend goes into your Co-op Membership account and the same amount goes towards supporting community organisations and local causes.



Original Factory Shop Support



Thanks to all the staff and customers at The Original Factory Shop in Bathgate who have once again supported the 50+ Network by selecting us as their chosen local charity.

Trustees Sue and Mary were in the shop at the end of November to meet the staff, bring them up to date with what the Network is doing and receive their generous donation.



A delighted Christine Powell won the raffle prize hamper kindly donated by the Co-op in Whitburn for our Coffee Morning and Craft Fair.



Blood Bikes

Many thanks to Philip Dodsworth from Blood Bikes Scotland who joined our members' meeting in November to tell us about the work of this great charity and the work they do to support the NHS.

Blood Bikes Scotland provide a free courier service to NHS facilities, transporting blood and other test samples, medication, equipment, patient notes and other small item medical supplies that can be carried easily. This results in savings for the NHS who would otherwise have to employ paid-for taxi or courier services.

The charity was established relatively recently in Scotland, first in the Borders in 2014, in Lothians in 2016, and now also covers Forth Valley, Fife, and, most recently, Tayside.

The initial launch which started with weekend cover only has progressed, since August 2017, to a 7-day service.

In 2021 alone, Blood Bikes Scotland answered in excess of 9,881 calls and saved in excess of £264,000 for the NHS. During this period the charity's 15 motorbikes (including one Zero Electric Motorcycle) and 3 cars covered more than 237,000 miles!

The service is professionally delivered by a combination of riding and non-riding volunteers. Blood Bikes Scotland volunteers give their time for free – no-one in the charity takes a salary.

Several of our members couldn't resist the chance of a shot on one of the specially adapted BMWs in the Blood Bikes' fleet.



Blood Bikes volunteer, Philip Dodsworth

Network's 600th Member

The 50+ Network has welcomed its 600th member, Kerry (pictured) who joined us in November along with her mother Gwen.





We were delighted to welcome West Lothian's Lord Lieutenant, Moira Niven, as guest speaker at our October members' meeting. Many members also had the chance to chat to Moira during coffee after her talk.

Silver Sunday

October 2nd was Silver Sunday, a national day to celebrate older people and tackle loneliness and isolation.

West Lothian 50 Plus Network was well represented at the West Lothian event at the Hilcroft in Whitburn. Here's some of our members joining in the fun.



The Brock

Koen Van Der Straeten, general manager of the Brock Garden and Craft Centre, was the guest speaker at our September members' meeting.

Koen spoke to us about the history of the Brock Garden Centre which is based behind the Strathbrock Partnership Centre in Broxburn. He explained its role as a charity and social enterprise which provides therapeutic horticulture, woodwork and craft activities for those experiencing chronic mental health conditions.

The plants and craft items are sold to the public and the proceeds go towards delivering activities at the centre.

Members took a collection of £70 for the Brock. Koen kindly donated a wooden planter to the Network as a prize for the raffle at the October meeting.



Koen Van Der Straeten, general manager of The Brock Garden, Wood and Craft Centre with Network trustees Eleanor (left) and Vanda

Members' Meetings

The Network's monthly members' meetings provide a chance to catch up with other members and find out about everything that is happening in the 50+ Network. Most months we hear from a guest speaker on a wide range of subjects.

Open to all members, these meetings take place on the third Saturday of the month in the Network's Hub at 14 George St, Bathgate from 10:30am to 12 noon.

Please bring along your Membership Card which will be scanned at the door.

Upcoming Guest Speakers

Put these dates in your diary for the next two Members' Meetings:

21st January 2023

The Armadale Shed - Community Woodwork and Craft Space

18th February 2023

The Past, the Present and the Future of The Regal Community Cinema with Electra McPhillips, former Executive Producer at the Reconnect Regal

Free Workshops

A free "Heat Your Home for Less" workshop run by Age Scotland was held in the Hub on Thursday 8th December.

We'll be working with Age Scotland to bring you more informative workshops like this in the next few months.

These will include a workshop to advise you on any allowances that you may be entitled to, and one on Dementia Awareness.

Age Scotland AGM and Awards

Trustees Anne and Sue represented the Network at the Age Scotland Annual General Meeting and Awards in Glasgow on 25th October.

This was a great chance to meet up with like-minded organisations and to bring new ideas and opportunities back to the Network.

After the formal business of the AGM, there was the opportunity for lunch followed by the awards ceremony where individual organisations around the country were recognised.

It was heart warming to see how much valuable work is going on around Scotland to support older people.



Trustees Anne and Sue had the chance to meet Kaye Adams at Age Scotland’s Annual Awards in Glasgow.



Age Scotland’s strategy for 2022-2025 was revealed at the charity’s recent AGM. We love their Vision for “a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older”.

Highly Commended

The West Lothian 50+ Network is delighted to have been Highly Commended in the Age Scotland's Awards 2022.

In a letter from Age Scotland's chief executive Brian Sloan, he wrote: "It was hugely inspiring to read about the work of your organisation and the dedication of the people involved. You should be very proud of all your work with and on behalf of older people".

Thanks to all who played a role in achieving this national recognition.



Art Group

Our Network now offers over 60 different interest groups, many of which are able to meet in our custom-designed space in the heart of Bathgate. We caught up with one of our two art groups, which meets on Tuesday afternoons in our Members' Hub.



Tea Volunteers

Thanks to all our tea volunteers who work behind the scenes at our events to keep us going with teas, coffees and other refreshments. They took a moment to pose for a photo in the kitchen at St Mary's Hall during our recent coffee morning.



Lest We Forget

This year, on Remembrance Sunday, Network trustee Tom Fairlie laid a wreath on behalf of the 50+ Network at the Bathgate War Memorial.

Here's Tom with fellow member Bill McEwan preparing to parade from the Legion.



Choir's Christmas

Cantata

The Network Choir is planning a musical treat for us again this Christmas.

Don't miss this year's musical evening of Christmas songs performed by the Network Singers.

The concert takes place on Monday 12th December at Armadale Parish Church.

Tickets will be "by donation" and will be made available in the Hub or at Armadale Parish Church. Tea, coffee and mince pies will be served in the hall afterwards to give everyone a chance to socialise.

Classic Cinema Group

Members who signed up for the new Classic Cinema group have been enjoying a variety of classic films.

The group meets at the Hub in the evening on the second Thursday of the month. Those present on the night vote for their choice of film from short list of options.

The film breaks for an intermission to give everyone a chance to socialise over a hot drink, biscuits, popcorn, and even a choc ice!



Badminton

Funding has helped to establish a new badminton group this year for Network members.

Weekly sessions are held at Craigswood Xcite Sports Centre in Livingston at 10.30 - 11.30 a.m. on Tuesdays.

The Network received funding to kickstart the group and this includes racquet hire and

shuttlecocks so that these sessions are free to members.

Three of the members said they hadn't played for years, two said they had never played before and the more experienced players are helping newbies to learn and develop their skills so that everyone has an enjoyable and fun time.

Our photo shows some of the members, along with group Leader Sheila, keen to get under way for their badminton session.



Members enjoying one of our recent Zumba sessions



Canasta and Scrabble

Just a bit of fun but, with a score of over 6,000, John was pleased to be the first to take home the new Canasta trophy.

If anyone would like to join in, the Canasta and Scrabble group meets in the Hub every Friday afternoon at 2pm.

Learn by sitting with an experienced player if you haven't played before; you'll soon pick it up.

Zumba

Zumba fitness classes are now being held at new premises in Studio One at Xcite Bathgate.

Our previous instructor had to give up the class due to illness, hence the move and new instructor.

The classes are specially tailored for the West Lothian 50+ Network under the professional guidance of Michelle Brown.

After Christmas the classes will continue to run every Tuesday commencing on 10 January.

Walking Outing to North Berwick

The Network's annual Walking Day Outing brings members of all the Network's walking groups together. Successfully organised by walk leader Heather Waddell over the last few years, these trips continue to prove to be very popular.

This year's trip to North Berwick on 8th October was no exception, with the trip almost selling out in the first week.

The 56 members who came along had five different walks to choose from, ranging from 2 miles to 9 miles.

Most walks made the most of the scenic beaches and coastline on the east coast around North Berwick, made all the more beautiful by fantastic sunny weather and blue skies.

The full day's outing allowed for all groups to have enough time to take in sights and scenes around the town itself, as well as visit some of the gardens, shops and the wide range of options for food and drink.



Trip to Pitlochry and the Enchanted Forest

The Networks' coach trip on 30th October was to Pitlochry and the Enchanted Forest.

48 members enjoyed a full day in Pitlochry before sharing high tea at Fisher's Hotel.

This was also the pick-up point for the coach transfer to Faskally Wood, where nature, music and lights combined to create a woodland wonderland.



Coach Trips Refund Policy

To maintain a competitive price for our coach trips, the Network's policy is that there is **no refund** of the cost of the coach (usually £15) if you are unable to make it, unless there is someone on the waiting list to take the place.

This is because we have to decide well in advance whether to firm up the coach reservation for any particular trip and we do this based on actual bookings, ensuring that we at least "break even".

Any additional costs for entrance fees etc **can usually be refunded** unless payment has already been made in advance (such as for the Enchanted Forest).

This policy helps us to keep our outings competitively priced for everyone.

Glamis Castle and Dundee

The weather was as you might have expected at the end of November, but our members always enjoy a good day out in great company.



44 members enjoyed a visit to the Christmas market at Glamis Castle, with the second half of the day spent in Dundee.

Older People's Champion

We were delighted to welcome West Lothian's new Older People's Champion, Councillor Anne McMillan, to the Hub on 3rd November.

It was the beginning of a dialogue through which we can channel our thoughts and ideas to the council about the things that matter to our members.



Raffle Prize Thanks

A big thank you to The Brock Garden, Wood and Craft Centre.

The Centre donated this lovely planter for the raffle at our October members' meeting.

Prize winner Sheila was delighted to give it pride of place in her garden.



Coach Trip to Rosslyn Chapel & The Scottish Parliament

Join our coach trip at the end of January (*Saturday 28th January*) and visit two fascinating buildings, one old, one new: Rosslyn Chapel and the Scottish Parliament.

Rosslyn Chapel, founded in 1446, has been a popular destination for visitors for generations. By the late 18th century it was starting to appear on itineraries, and its profile greatly increased after the publication of Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, and the subsequent film.

The cost of entrance to the Chapel is included and you will have free time to explore.

We then go by coach to the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, arriving at 13:00. There will be time for lunch in

the Parliament café or nearby before the tour at 14:30.

At the Scottish Parliament there will be an introductory talk. The group will then split in two and take short, successive tours around the Parliament building. The whole visit will last 45 minutes, after which the group will have the chance to explore the Public Gallery of the Debating Chamber and the exhibition.

Cost: £22.50

Included is return coach travel from Bathgate, entrance to Rosslyn Chapel, transfer to the Scottish Parliament and an included tour of the building.

Now on sale at the Hub.



Members' Survey

Our Members' Survey 2022 aims to update members' feedback on the range of activities provided by the 50+ Network.

It's been 2 years since we last surveyed our members and a lot has changed since then. Since the Network re-opened following the Covid closures there has been a surge of interest resulting in a significant increase in the number of new members. The Network has also opened its new Members' Hub in the centre of Bathgate resulting in a number of changes since our last survey in 2020.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to ensure that the Network continues to provide activities that our members value. The results will guide the Network's Trustees in the continuing development of the organisation. The results will also support funding applications and be of interest to existing funders who want to ensure that they receive best value for any grants they award to help us deliver our activities.

Most members will complete the survey online but paper copies of the survey are also available. Thanks to everyone who has completed the online survey so far. The Network is run by members for members so it's important for everyone to have their say.

The survey will close on Friday 16th December 2022 and we hope to get the results to you early in the New Year.



Leaders' Lunch

A lunch will be held on 18th January to thank all the volunteer leaders of Network groups.

The Network now has some 68 active groups, led by 47 leaders (some lead more than one group). These are members who are prepared to share their skills and hobbies, and volunteer their time with other members.

Although we also have a few paid instructors, for classes which are taught - such as Pilates and Zumba - the core ethos of the Network is that it is run by members for other members.

An annual lunch has been the Network's traditional way of showing its thanks to our volunteers, however because of Covid, this is the first that we have been able to hold since January 2019.

Thermometers

Age Scotland is campaigning to help older people stay warm and safe this winter through the distribution of free thermometers which include top tips on staying warm and saving on fuel bills.

The project has been funded by the Scottish Government to help tackle poor health over the winter and high levels of fuel poverty, especially among older people.

Cold weather can seriously worsen existing health conditions, and put you at greater risk of flu, respiratory and circulatory diseases.

Age Scotland's thermometer door

Value Of Our Volunteers

What are our volunteers worth? We've always known they're worth their weight in gold, but now we have quantified their value to the Network.

Our Management Committee comprises 9 volunteer trustees. In addition, some 47 members volunteer to lead our 68 very wide-ranging and inclusive activity groups. Added to this are the many ad hoc helpers who can be called on to help with events and other activities.

Using a conservative estimate, in 2022 our volunteers have given some 11,825 hours free of charge across all our activities.

If calculated only at the current living wage of £9.50 this equates to a total volunteer value for the year of £112,337!

hangers are a smart way to help you stay warm and healthy this winter by helping to make sure you are keeping your living areas at the optimum temperature. We have stocks at the Hub if you would like one.





Thrift Shop Fundraiser

What a fantastic response to our pop-up fundraising thrift shop, when £2,332 was raised in just three days at the end of September.

This was our first Thrift Shop fundraiser since 2019. Before that, it was an annual event which raised much needed funds for the Network.

This year's sale was held at our Hub in Bathgate between Thursday 29th September to Saturday 1st October.

Thanks to everyone who made it happen, including chief organisers Kate and Liz, all our volunteers who sorted, set up and served in the shop, all our members and friends who had a good sort out and donated items for sale and local business Knightly Gaming, who allowed us to store donations in their basement.

School Kids Winter Warmer Appeal

The School Bank is a volunteer-led group aiming to improve the lives of children in local families experiencing financial hardship by providing them with a brand-new school uniform and other clothing and equipment required for the school day.

The Network first became involved with The School Bank in October 2019 when members embraced the charity's "SOCKtober" appeal by donating many pairs of new socks suitable for school wear.

You can find out more about The School Bank on their website at <https://schoolbank-westlothian.org/>

If you would like to support their current "Winter Warmer" appeal, we are taking donations at the Hub of new socks, gloves and scarves suitable for pupils from P1 to S6.

In My Day...

Do you find yourself saying "in my day" ... "in my time"? Here's another way of looking at it.

Respect the younger generation and their opinions. They may not have the same ideas as you, but they are the future, and will take the world in their direction. Give advice, not criticism, and try to remind them that yesterday's wisdom still applies today.

Never use the phrase: "In my time." Your time is now. As long as you're alive, you are part of this time.



Coffee Morning & Craft Fair

Our annual Coffee Morning and Craft Fair took place on 5th November. It was the first time we have been able to have the event since October 2019.

This is an important fundraiser for the Network and, with almost 100 members attending, this year's event was a great success raising £814.

It's also a fantastic social event, and, as usual, St Mary's Hall in Bathgate was buzzing!

Our 'crafty' members did us proud, producing an array of items that were sold at the fair. Members who love baking also put on a tasty spread for everyone to enjoy with their coffee or to purchase to take home and enjoy later. Members' generosity was also seen in the donations which made up the popular tombola stall.

Thanks to everyone who helped to make the event such a success. Thanks to all our bakers, to all our crafters, to the ladies who manned the tombola and raffle, to the Co-op in Whitburn who provided the fantastic hamper for our raffle prize, to the team of ladies who kept us all topped up with tea and coffee, and to everyone else who helped to fetch and carry, wash dishes, move furniture and generally keep the show on the road.

It's great to be able to boost our funds with an event like this, but like all Network events, the best outcomes are measured in the great sense of community and all the happy faces.



Hub Christmas Closure

The Hub will be closed for members' support services over the Christmas and New Year period from Friday 23rd December 2022 until Monday 9th January 2023.

Groups can continue to meet if they wish during this period. Group Leaders have keys and will be able to access the premises. If your group uses the Hub, please refer to your Group Leader to find out if your group plans to continue over the festive period.

Twixmas Drop In

Is your group taking a break over Christmas?

With the Hub closed for a two-week period over the Christmas period, and many groups taking a festive break, Heather, Eleanor and Allan will host a tea/ coffee drop-in session at the Hub for anyone who wants some company and a chat.

Meet them at the Hub on Wednesday 28th December between 10.30 and 12.30 pm.

Network News



What is the West Lothian 50+ Network?

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

We facilitate a wide range of physical, social, educational and cultural activities for our members, with the aim of keeping active in mind and body whilst combating social isolation.

We meet monthly with an interesting speaker, offer more than 60 special interest groups and run day trips, holidays, concerts, dinners and other events.

Limitation of Liability

West Lothian 50+ Network does not assess its members' fitness for participation in any of its various activities.

The decision about your fitness to undertake any activity lies within yourself, together with any medical advice you wish to take. It is your own responsibility to ensure your personal safety and that of your belongings.

We want to hear from you

Do you have a story you'd like to share with other members?

Or an idea for a topic you'd like us to cover?

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

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

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

Editor: Sue Bedford-Visser
suebedford_visser@hotmail.com

Dates for your Diary

12th December - Choir's Christmas Cantata

17th December - Christmas Party

18th January - Leaders' Lunch

21st January - Members' meeting

28th January - Coach Trip: Rosslyn Chapel & Parliament

18th February - Members' meeting

25th February - Coach Trip: Cambo & St Andrews

18th March - Members' meeting

Members' meetings take place on the third Saturday of the month in the Network's premises at 14 George St, Bathgate from 10:30am to 12 noon.

Contact West Lothian 50+ Network

14 George Street

Phone: 01506 635510

Bathgate

Email: hub@westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk

EH48 1PW

Website: www.westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk

Open Mon– Fri, 10am to 2pm Facebook: [WestLothian50PlusNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/WestLothian50PlusNetwork)

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