

## Network Meets Equalities Minister



West Lothian 50+ Network recently met with Kaukab Stewart, Minister for Equalities, at the Scottish Parliament to highlight the impact of community-led action in tackling loneliness and social isolation.

The meeting brought together our Charity Manager, Chair of the Board, volunteers and members, creating an opportunity for older people in West Lothian to speak directly about their lived experience. Members shared how connection, routine and belonging through the Network have strengthened wellbeing, confidence and sense of purpose.

Discussion focused on the preventative role of grassroots organisations and their contribution to national priorities, including the Scottish Government's strategy Recovering Connections 2023–2026. With more than 750 members and over 80 volunteer-led groups, the Network provides structured opportunities for connection, activity and peer support every week across West Lothian.

A clear message emerged: the third sector provides essential community infrastructure to address loneliness. As future strategies are developed, organisations like ours must be supported, consulted early and recognised as strategic partners.

We thank the Minister for her time and engagement, and welcome the opportunity to contribute to ongoing national conversations on reducing loneliness and strengthening communities.

## Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund

We are delighted to confirm that West Lothian 50+ Network has secured a multi-year award from the Scottish Government's Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults, distributed locally through Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian.

This is a significant endorsement of the Network's role in supporting mental health and wellbeing across West Lothian. The Fund was established to strengthen community-based mental health provision, tackle social isolation and reduce inequalities. National impact reporting shows that investment in grassroots organisations like ours is a core part of Scotland's preventative mental health approach.

A multi-year award provides stability. It allows us to plan ahead, strengthen existing groups, expand activity in under-represented areas, and invest in sustainable delivery rather than short-term fixes. Most importantly, it ensures members continue to access welcoming, consistent opportunities for connection, activity and support.



## Upcoming Day Trips



Members enjoying a day out at Summerlee Museum and Garrion Bridges

### V&A Museum & Dundee – Saturday 28 March

A day trip to Dundee's waterfront including entry to V&A Dundee, Scotland's design museum. After exploring the exhibitions and Scottish Design Galleries, enjoy free time in the compact city centre with shops, museums and riverside walks nearby.

**Cost: £21 per person (includes return coach travel from Bathgate and museum entry)**

**On Sale: Wednesday 25 February 2026 from 10am**

### Anstruther Coastal Walks – Saturday 11 April

A chance for walkers to join one of a range of 4 led walks on the Fife coast to suit different abilities (10 miles, 8.5 miles, 4 miles or 2.5 miles), all finishing in Anstruther. After the walks, there will be time to relax in this lovely harbour town, explore the shops, enjoy the sea air and perhaps a traditional fish supper before we head home.

**Cost: £21 per person**

**On Sale: Wednesday 11 March 2026 from 10am.**

**Details of walk options on booking.**

### North Berwick with Seabird Centre Option – Saturday 25 April

A spring trip to North Berwick with time to explore the harbour, beaches, shops and cafés. Optional group visit to the Scottish Seabird Centre to discover marine life and view live cameras from the Bass Rock.

**Cost: £21 (North Berwick only)**

**£33 (with Seabird Centre add-on)**

**On Sale: Wednesday 25 March 2026 from 10am**

**Trips can be booked in the Hub, by phone or online.**

**For more information on any upcoming trips and events, please contact the Hub team on 01506 635510 between 10am and 2pm, Monday to Friday.**

**Please let us know if you have any accessibility needs when booking.**

## Music Afternoon a Sell-Out



The Members' Hub was fully decorated and every ticket sold for a lively afternoon of singing and dancing with Alex and Carol, two of our own Network Singers.

The music crossed the decades, from 60s favourites such as Da Doo Ron Ron to Tina Turner's Simply The Best. The dance floor was well used and members were in strong voice, with plenty of enthusiastic sing-alongs throughout the afternoon.

We are grateful to Tesco Bathgate, Morrisons Bathgate and The Chain Runner Livingston for their generous donations, which helped make the event possible.

Thank you to all the volunteers and organisers who supported the day, and especially to Alex and Carol for delivering such an enjoyable and uplifting event for members.

## Strong Start to Coach Trips in 2026

Our first coach trip of 2026 on 31 January took members to Summerlee Museum of Scottish Industrial Life in Coatbridge, followed by a visit to Garrion Bridges Garden & Antiques Centre.

Members enjoyed exploring the museum's exhibitions before heading to the Clyde Valley for lunch and a browse around the garden and antiques centre. A strong start to this year's trips programme and a well-supported day out.

There has also been enthusiastic take up of the February outing to Abbotsford House and Melrose, which has now sold out.



## Activity Groups Update

### Badminton

Our new Badminton group launches on Wednesday 18th February at Craigswood Xcite, Livingston from 2pm to 3pm. £2 per session to cover the cost of the court.

### Gaelic for Beginners

Five-week Gaelic for Beginners course at the WL50+ Hub in Bathgate. Running Mondays 12:00pm to 1:00pm from 23rd February, the sessions cover practical phrases and a simple introduction to Gaelic in Scotland.

### Last Wednesday Social

The Last Wednesday Social is a relaxed evening at the WL50+ Hub for a cuppa and a chat, held on the last Wednesday of each month from 6:30pm to 8:30pm. It's an informal, welcoming space to connect with others and round off the month in good company.

First evening: Wednesday 25th February.



Our new monthly Sunday Social Supper in the hub



Miles and Smiles walk along the Fife Coastal Path



Members enjoying Monday's Darts and Dominos

## Dates For Your Diary

### Spring Makers Market

 Saturday 21st March, 10am to 2pm

 WL50+ Hub, 14 George Street, Bathgate

Our Spring Makers Market is a public event showcasing the creativity across the Network.

All items will be sold by the Network on the day, with proceeds supporting our work. If you or your group would like to donate handmade items, we would be delighted to receive them. The theme is Spring, flowers, fresh colours, Easter and new beginnings.

We'll also be running a tombola and welcome donations of new or unwanted gifts in good condition.

### New Members Get-Together – Bathgate


 Wednesday 4th March, 4:00pm to 6:00pm


 WL50+ Hub, 14 George Street, Bathgate

### New Members Get-Together – Linlithgow

 Thursday 12th March, 11:00am to 1:00pm

 Linlithgow Burgh Halls, The Cross, Linlithgow

 Thinking about joining, recently signed up, or already a member and want to connect locally?

 Informal drop-in. Meet the Member Support Team, speak to members and volunteers, and get a clear picture of how everything works.

 No booking needed

## Members in National Campaign

We were proud to support Age Scotland's national legacy campaign, "The Silence of Old Age," which highlights the quiet reality of loneliness and the power of connection in later life.

Several of our members took part in the filming at the Hub, helping to bring the message to life, both on screen and through voiceover. The campaign shows that isolation is not inevitable and that community, purpose and belonging can change the story.



## Volunteer Spotlight



Jean has been a valued member of the Network for almost 17 years and is genuinely one of a kind. Warm-hearted, full of character, and always welcoming, she's the kind of person who would go out of her way to help anyone. You'll hear Jean before you see her, but that's all part of her charm!

A regular at our Friday Scrabble group at the Hub, Jean makes sure the tea and coffee are ready for everyone, keeps the Member Support Team in check, and somehow always has snacks on hand. She just seems to know when they need it most.

She also leads the Scrabblers group at Rosemount Gardens and loves coming along on our monthly coach trips.

Full of energy, laughter, and pure appreciation, Jean is a friend to many and an absolute gem.

## Members' Hub – Your Space

A reminder that the Hub is your space.

You don't need to be booked onto a group to come in. If we're open, you're welcome to pop in for a cuppa, have a seat, read the noticeboard, ask us something, or just enjoy a bit of company.

Some members drop in between appointments. Others come in because they don't want to sit in the house all day.



## YPI Project – Linlithgow Academy

We are pleased to confirm that pupils at Linlithgow Academy have secured £3,000 for West Lothian 50+ Network through the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI). This is a powerful active citizenship programme empowering young people to make a difference in their communities while developing a range of skills.

The standard of the final, when students made presentations on their chosen charity, was extremely high, with strong cases also in support of Women's Aid, SMILE Counselling and School Bank West Lothian. The pupils represented the Network exceptionally well and clearly demonstrated the value of our work locally.

Their proposal focused on expanding programmes and groups within Linlithgow, directly supporting our growth plans in the area. We are now exploring how this can develop into a wider piece of joint work with pupils so that the funding creates sustained impact and meaningful intergenerational engagement, rather than being a one-off award.

This is a positive and strategic opportunity for the Network, strengthening both our local presence and our connection with younger generations.



*The successful team at Linlithgow Academy*

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