

H&R u3a – AGM – Chair's report 2025-26

The Chair's AGM report is the opportunity to reach out with an update to the whole membership rather than just those in attendance. No matter our role within H&R's u3a, we are all volunteers. Other than reimbursing out-of-pocket expenses such as food and drink at the AGM, Speaker meetings and other social events, no payments are made to the convenors, the meeters, the greeters or the event helpers. All of them in their own way help to keep this u3a ticking over and I wish to put on record my personal thanks to all them.

There is another group which I must also sincerely thank – the committee. Throughout the past year they have managed to keep me on the straight and narrow despite my several wobbles. To summarise my first year as Chairman: it has been an interesting one. A number of things have happened which have needed the collective experiences of the committee to resolve and I want to record my special thanks to them here.

In the past 12 months committee membership has seen a number of changes and, at the time of drafting, I am happy to report that H&R u3a is once again compliant with its constitution – the plea for a volunteer to act as Vice Chair has been answered. During the course of this AGM, I hope you, the members, will ratify the committee membership. Two new roles have been added. There is now a Welfare Officer and an Inclusion Officer; the former has been taken on by our Minutes Secretary and the latter, added almost a year ago, has recently been taken on by Jane Skinner who, with her trusty mobility scooter, can prove or disprove matters of access. Her predecessor pointed out access shortcomings at the White Rock Hotel which led us to change the Hastings coffee morning venue to the White Rock Theatre just next door.

The addition of two new roles to the committee has triggered a long overdue review of job descriptions which we are slowly working through together with reviews of and updates to the policies and procedures. The essential four policies: Safeguarding, Health and Safety, GDPR and EDI have been completed and can be found on the H&R u3a web site.

For a long time now, the committee has heard (or not) comments about the noise level in the De La Warr Pavilion and a search has been undertaken to find a quieter venue. We think a more suitable venue has been found and hope to move there in August. An e-mail about the venue and its location (very near the DLWP) will be/has been sent out soon.

Throughout the year we have had an interesting programme of talks alternating between Bexhill and Hastings. A draft programme for 2027 has already been presented to the committee and will be published shortly. We are always looking for interesting speakers and if, through your association with other organisations, you come across such – please forward details to our Speakers Secretary.

Earlier this calendar year, many of you will have heard me promoting the need for ICE (In Case of Emergency) cards and you might also have read it in the Newsletter. There is a way of putting these details on the lock screen of your mobile 'phone. However, successive versions of the operating system seem to make it harder and you will probably need a young teenager to sort you out. When all else fails, ICE credit card-sized cards which fit in your wallet or purse are available – just ask.

The committee is well aware of its GDPR commitments; however, we do need your contact details for the legitimate business of keeping you informed of H&R's and other's u3a activities. Unless you are really interested, I will not be forwarding e-mail offers of cheap digital post boxes in the City of London, or of lucrative pension arrangements, or of better funeral rates all of which I receive (as Chair) on a weekly basis.

Members without e-mail will, of course, still receive information through the post but we are recommending that wherever possible you get a young teenager to induct you into the 20th century (or better yet 21st) and set you up with the necessary 'tech' to receive and transmit e-mails. Postage costs are a not insignificant annual outlay.

In a similar vein, we made a decision last year to move away from cash, taking payments by bank transfer or card machine. We now have two card machines and at least one should be available at Coffee mornings and Speaker meetings. Your bank will have supplied you with a bank card which I would urge you to consider using when paying for u3a events. H&R u3a payments will rarely if ever be above £100 so a simple card tap on the machine will complete the payment.

Our membership numbers seem to oscillate annually around 500 and are served by some 80+ groups. Many have waiting lists especially the language groups (I am a language group convenor). If you have an interest in a language and are willing to lead/host/convene a group of similarly interested people, please contact our Groups Coordinator who will send out a suitable notice.

Looking forward to the next 12 months, I hope that you will continue to enjoy our u3a, its groups, its social events and other activities. If you have an idea for an event or a trip, please get in touch with our Social Team Convenor. I look forward to seeing and meeting you at our monthly coffee mornings or speaker meetings.

Richard Stanton

July 2026