

Inverness and Black Isle u3a Newsletter

Welcome

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2025. As you can see, this is my first attempt and a work in progress. I don't seem to have received a lot of news from the groups this month but I guess that was because there was less activity over the Christmas period. Feel free to offer any suggestions or feedback. You can email me on ibiu3anewsletter@gmail.com

A word from our Convener

News

I am delighted to tell you all that Stuart Findlay has taken up the role of Vice-Convener and that Avril Mountford now is our secretary. Many thanks to Stuart and Avril.

We are still looking for an Assistant Website Editor – could this be you?

New Members

The Coffee and Craic group is an ideal way to meet other members and offers a particular welcome to those who have just joined.

Groups

The last few months have been busy and we now have a number of new and thriving groups. Each of these groups has a named facilitator, but the gardening and travel groups are both running as collectives with members taking it in turn to organise meetings or events.

- [Coffee and Craic](#)
- [Dine with Me](#)
- [Gardening](#)
- [Pickleball](#)
- [Sunday Lunch](#)
- [Travel](#)

General Meetings

We have two meetings in February:

February 3rd 2pm

Fortrose Free Church

[*Saving Wildcats: Restoring the Highland tiger in the Cairngorms National Park*](#)

The talk will be given by Jamie Sneddon who is one of the project officers for Saving Wildcats, the partnership project aiming to restore the Scottish wildcat population by breeding them for release and mitigating the threats that they face.



February 7th 11.15am (refreshments from 10.30)

Spectrum Centre, Inverness

[*Are you making the most of your smartphone?*](#)

The talk will be given by Chris Grant from Ability Net. (This is a replacement for the talk scheduled for January 24th which had to be cancelled because of Chris's ill health.)

Note: advance booking is required for this meeting; email me ibiconvener@gmail.com. There will be a cost of £3 for refreshments payable at the door in cash.



March General Meeting

BE A MENTOR
FOR YOU?

"You don't need a lot of skills or qualities, you just need to be a good listener and really caring. That's all I can say, you just need a good heart to be a mentor. I would say if somebody's thinking about doing it, they're the right person."

WHAT'S STOPPING
YOU?

MCR
PATHWAYS

3rd March at 2pm

Culloden Baptist Church

Mentoring

Abigail Lucas, Programme Manager for MCR North of Scotland, explains MCR Pathways' work in local schools. MCR Pathways is a national, award-winning mentoring programme, aimed at giving all young people equality of education outcomes, career opportunities and life chance.

Zoom Only Groups

We know that a number of our members either have mobility issues or are unable to attend meetings because of care responsibilities and the committee are considering offering some Zoom only groups. Initially we are considering philosophy, current affairs and a book group. If you would be interested in joining such groups do please let me know.

Mindfulness and Meditation Group

There are plans to start a weekly group on February 5th from 2pm to 3pm on Zoom. The time may well change to 90 minutes or two hours.

It will be a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course which usually lasts 8 weeks for two hours each week, but is likely to be extended.

NB Once started, it would be very difficult for new members to join the course.

New! Book Swap

An exciting new feature is to be appearing at the Inverness and Black Isle u3a general meetings:

free to all BOOK SWAP

Its very simple and it works like this: you browse the selection of books on the BOOK TABLE at our general meetings. If there are any that take your fancy, feel free to take it home and enjoy.

ADDITIONALLY, if you have any books at home that you have finished reading and no longer want, bring them all in and add to our stock, then other members can choose something they would like to read. Simple as that.

So, get looking out for your unwanted books and bring them along to any of our general meetings, the more books we have, the more interesting the selection for other members. Any queries? Ask Avril via ibiu3asecretary@gmail.com



Volunteering

Many of you volunteer in your own communities and for local charities, so you are well aware of the benefits. If you are willing to volunteer for your u3a Committee to safeguard our current assets, to continue to provide a high quality service and to secure our future, please contact Fiona at ibiconvener@gmail.com to find out more.

Coffee and Craic Group

Five of us met in the Royal Highland Hotel for the first meeting of the Coffee and Craic Group. We had a lively and interesting discussion about all kinds of different subjects, including the potential health benefits of drinking coffee in the morning. I think we all enjoyed our chat over a warming cup of coffee on a cold January morning, though none of us sampled their speciality mocha with a cinnamon swirl.

The ambience was very relaxing and slightly reminiscent of a bygone era, with the grandfather clock in the corner and various pieces of artwork adorning the walls. The lobby area where we met dates back to 1852 and the impressive staircase apparently inspired the chief engineers of the Titanic.

It was lovely to be able to get together with other members, share a bit about ourselves and engage in some light-hearted banter. Hopefully, we all left feeling uplifted.

Our next meeting will be at the Palace Hotel, 8 Ness Walk, Inverness at 10:30 am on Wednesday 19th February. It's an opportunity to get to know other members better and to make new connections. Depending upon the weather, we may go for a leisurely walk by the river after we have our coffee.

New Groups

Fiona is still hoping to see some music groups established:

- Music Appreciation (possibly on a desert island disc theme led by members)
- Music Playing - a group for all who play any instrument at any standard

Other suggested groups are:

- Chess
- Cryptic Crosswords

If you would be interested in any of the above do let Fiona know (ibiconvener@gmail.com)



Email addresses

For the past year, office bearers on the Committee have been using new gmail addresses, rather than their own personal email. This means the email address remains the same when there is a change of personnel. The Committee would now like to see all interest groups using similar email addresses and Anna has agreed to set these up. Group leaders/facilitators will hear from her soon!

Science Group

The U3A Science group is a friendly group which usually meets in the North Kessock Community Hub. This is accessible by bus and is just opposite the North Kessock Hotel. We would like to have more members. It is not necessary to have a science background. Meetings may take the form of an informal discussion, with queries checked and answered quickly via an online search.

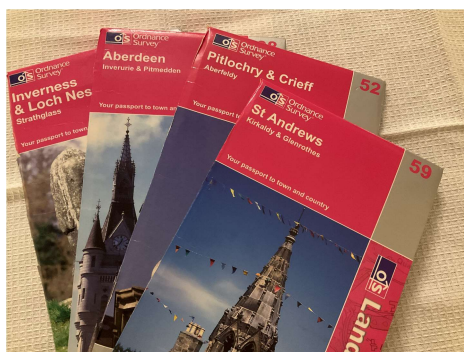
Members who are interested in joining should send an email to ibiconvener@gmail.com, or simply come to one of the meetings on the days and times mentioned below.

A recent discussion was on paradoxes, and we considered in particular the Raven Paradox. In doing so we also discovered that there may be connections between data compression and complexity, so a future session will deal with data compression, which is now widely used on a daily basis by most of us, though we don't think of it, in computer communications, image processing (photography) and digital TV.

Other interests include biological subjects (most of us didn't know that it's possible to vaccinate fish with a syringe!), and engineering such as energy production and distribution, cosmology, geology and volcanoes. We hope to have a forthcoming session on volcanoes in the next few months.

The next two meetings will be on February 27th - with the doors open at 2.15pm and then in March on 20th again with the doors open at 2.15pm.

Walking Exchange Group update



On Friday 29th November, Avril participated in a walking exchange group zoom meeting to meet new members who are interested in participating in this scheme. Also to meet Alison who is the new member of staff who, amongst other duties, is to take over the role of facilitator for the walking exchange scheme.

I reminded participants about the extremely successful exchange that Inverness and Black Isle u3a walking group hosted during April last year and answered questions about the nuts and bolts of hosting such an exchange.

One point that was emphasised was that it was not necessary for an exchange to involve a group; it could be a couple or an individual. A lady from the Isle of Bute was in this meeting and that certainly gave me ideas as to where I might like to pay a visit and do some walking with likeminded folk.

Another feature highlighted, was the opportunity to share a walk with neighbouring u3as; as an example - if the Edinburgh u3a walking group were to be undertaking a walk which was of interest (and new) to Inverness and Black Isle u3a, they could join them on this walk, possibly just taking overnight accommodation rather than make a lengthy drive before and after the walk.

Finally we were reminded, that an exchange did not have to necessarily involve all walking; visiting cultural sites, gardens, other local places of interest can also be accommodated

I have a list of all the u3a groups (68 to date) participating in the walking exchange scheme for anyone who wishes to know more about the scheme.

Avril Mountford - Walking Exchange Advisor, Scotland (ibiu3asecretary@gmail.com)

Live links

Just in case you hadn't realised - the links to email addresses and website pages in this newsletter are live; use Ctrl-click on PCs or Cmd-click on Macs to open them!

IBI u3a Website

We are always looking for new content and photos, so if you would like to write an article about your u3a activities, we would publish it on the site and we would very much appreciate any photos of activities or events.

Please remember to check that anyone in your photos is happy to have their photo on the website.

If you have visited the website, you will have seen that there is a listing of all forthcoming meetings on the home page. Please will Group Leaders/Facilitators let Anna know the dates of their meetings so that they can be listed.

If you haven't yet viewed the website, please [take a look!](#) Feedback is always welcome 😊

We are now looking for an assistant website editor, so if IT is your thing, please contact Anna at ibiu3awebsite@gmail.com.

.....and finally

Thank you to all of you who submitted pieces. If I've missed anything off it was entirely accidental. It may be obvious I haven't found Spellcheck!

Please can you submit your contributions for the next newsletter by 24th February with more photos.

Daphne Taylor

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