



## Ashbourne & District u3a

### Speaker Engagement, Meetings & Events Policy

#### Purpose & application

The talks and presentations given at the monthly 'all members' meetings of Ashbourne & District u3a ('A&Du3a'), and the meetings, visits and trips undertaken by its various interest groups, are integral to A&Du3a's activities. The roles of the speaker-finder - securing suitable speakers for general meetings - and of the interest group leaders are accordingly key to the success of the organisation.

The document sets out the policy of A&Du3a on the selection of speakers to address meetings and its general approach to the suitability of events (i.e. visits and trips) organised through A&Du3a. It applies in relation to both its general meetings and meetings and events organised for its interest groups.

It also applies to both external speakers (i.e. to persons who are not members of A&Du3a) and to A&Du3a's own members addressing meetings etc of the organisation.

#### General principle

It is the general position of A&Du3a that its members are responsible, mature adults and that accordingly, in principle, there should be no limitations imposed on the discussion of topics or undertaking events, even where such matters might be considered controversial, provided that appropriate standards of probity, integrity and mutual respect are maintained. Indeed, certain of its interest groups consider controversial matters as their subject matter for discussion.

There are however some limitations which A&Du3a consider should apply to the selection of speakers and events organised as part of its activities. The aim is to ensure that the selection of speakers and events is, notwithstanding this general position, appropriate to A&Du3a's aims and objectives and is consistent with the principles of the u3a Movement.

The following three qualifications therefore apply:

- (1) *A&Du3a strives to be an inclusive, non-discriminatory organisation. Speakers must not be invited or accepted who are likely to present racist or other discriminatory views relating ethnic origin, nationality, statelessness or race; age; disability; religion, belief or absence of belief; marital or civil partnership status; sexual orientation;*

*pregnancy; gender reassignment; and sex<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, events should not be organised where such views are likely to be expressed or encountered.*

- (2) *A&Du3a is a secular and non-political organisation. Speakers must not therefore be invited or accepted to address any of its meetings, or events organised, with the intention of promoting or endorsing any religious or political organisation or views.*

N.B. It is important to note that the emphasis under Qualification (1) above is on the *discriminatory* nature of the views likely to be presented and, under Qualification (2), it is the *proselytisation* or *politicisation* aspect which is of concern.

For example:

- Talks or studies on such topics as the history of racism or slavery and its impact, on the science of human evolution, the treatment of age, disability or sexual orientation in society, comparative religion or church history would not breach these qualifications provided the speaker or subject matter was not discriminatory in nature. These and similar topics are legitimate subjects for learning, interest and discussion even if potentially controversial in nature.
  - A member of the clergy recounting stories from his or her life, or a member of the Salvation Army describing the social work done by it in the local community: these speakers and topics would be perfectly acceptable.
  - Similarly, a visit to a religious building (e.g. in the context of pursuing heritage interests) would not be in breach these qualifications, even if the visit was hosted by a representative of the relevant organisation.
  - A local MP presenting a talk about his or her experience as a Member of Parliament or hosting a visit to the Houses of Parliament in his or her capacity as a constituency MP would be acceptable provided that the event was not party-political in emphasis.
- (3) *A&Du3a is non-commercial, non-business organisation and does not endorse any professional, commercial or business interests. Speakers and events where the primary purpose is to promote such interests should not be invited, accepted or undertaken. Similarly, A&Du3a will not circulate promotional materials relating to such interests for such purpose.*

N.B. Again, it is important to note that the emphasis under Qualification (3) is on the *primary purpose* of the relevant presentation or event. Speakers and the hosts of events often represent some kind of business activity but this does not in itself breach this qualification. The issues to consider are whether the presentation or event has an appropriate learning or interest context for A&Du3a's members; the extent to which its

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<sup>1</sup> These are 'protected characteristics' laid down in the Equality Act 2010.



purpose is the promotion of the relevant business activity; and the balance between these two factors.

For example, the following types of presentations and events would not be considered in breach of this qualification as there is in each case a significant learning or interest context and any commercial considerations are secondary or incidental:

- A visit by a gardening interest group to a garden centre or nursery where a talk is given by a member of the business's staff followed by a tour of the premises, notwithstanding that members might purchase items from the business at the event.
- A presentation by a person representing a science, manufacturing or engineering business, or a visit to such premises, by a relevant interest group.
- A presentation by a person demonstrating a particular skill of interest to members of A&Du3a, notwithstanding that the person concerned might offer items for sale or training or courses in his or her field (e.g. an artistic pursuit, woodturning, stone-wall building etc).
- A talk by a writer, composer or musician about his or her work, notwithstanding that books or recordings by him or her might be available for purchase at the meeting or event or referred to as available for purchase.

In the above instances however, there must be no pressure, express or implied, on members to make any purchase or commitment.

On the other hand, a presentation by a financial advisor about investment planning, or by a local solicitor about making wills or living powers of attorney, would not be acceptable since the subject matter would relate primarily to the personal affairs of members and would be advisory in nature. This would be the case even if the would-be speaker agreed not to promote his or her business or firm directly, because the mere fact that he or she had been given the opportunity to address members might be taken as an endorsement of him or her, or the business or firm he or she represents, by A&Du3a<sup>2</sup>.

It should also be understood that the views expressed by any speaker do not of course represent the views of A&Du3a.

### **Payment to speakers**

Speakers engaged to speak at u3a's monthly or general meeting often ask for payment and/or reimbursement of travelling expenses etc. In many instances such payments are passed by the speakers to the charitable organisation which they represent or similar worthy cause.

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<sup>2</sup> Most commercial or business speakers will for instance present slides which state on them the name of the firm etc which they represent.



A&Du3a's policy therefore is to make (if requested) modest payments or reimbursement of reasonable expenses to speakers addressing its monthly or general meetings. For this purpose, amounts of up to £150 (or such other sum as the Committee of A&Du3a might agree from time to time, either generally or in specific cases) would be considered appropriate.

In accordance with the founding principles of the u3a movement however, no payment will be made to any A&Du3a member engaged to address any meeting of its members.

### Promotional materials and collections

As indicated above, speakers or event hosts may ask to make available materials promoting their interest or activity, or giving information about the charitable cause which they represent, to A&Du3a members attending a talk or event hosted by them. Provided such materials are in keeping with the general principles stated above, A&Du3a has no objection to this. Such materials should however be left for A&Du3a members to pick up themselves (i.e. if they wish to do so rather than handed out directly to them).

Similarly, speakers sometimes ask if they may place a 'collection tin' on behalf of the charitable cause which they represent for A&Du3a members to contribute to if they wish. As long as the relevant cause is one which is generally recognised as charitable, A&Du3a has no objection to this provided that (i) there is no express or implied obligation on members to make any contribution and (ii) there is no active seeking of contributions (i.e. collection tins should not be carried around seeking contributions but placed so that members may, if they wish, contribute of their own volition and without pressure to do so).

### Requests for assistance

A&Du3a occasionally receives requests from third parties representing charitable or other worthy cause for assistance, either through speakers engaged to speak at its meetings or by unsolicited contact. Sometimes such requests are seeking volunteers to help with or take on a role in another organisation. As long as the relevant charity or cause is one which is generally recognised as charitable, A&Du3a has no objection in principle to conveying such requests to its members at its meetings provided that there is no express or implied obligation conveyed to members that A&Du3a expects a member (or some members) to step forward to meet any such request.

The decision on whether to convey such requests to members therefore shall be made by A&Du3a's Chair and Vice-Chair in accordance with this guidance.

Policy approved by ADu3a Committee On 2025	Chair S E Hall
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