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The purpose of this bi-monthly newsletter is to provide useful information to our Beacon Users.

Message from Beacon National Support Lead

A Happy New Year to All and welcome back to Beacon News.

The news is that we have deployed the Gift Aid upgrade. This upgrade ensures that people Joining or Renewing on line are presented with an explanation of Gift Aid and the responsibilities that a member has when agreeing to it. There are now two tick boxes on the online renewal form, one for yes I agree to Gift Aid and one for no. You can not move on from this form unless one of the tick boxes are ticked.

Additional to this, on the Membership renewals page the membership secretary can see who is Gift Aided and who is not in a new tick box column that has been added to the page. These tick boxes can be corrected by the membership secretary inline with details on the membership forms.

All of these changes are logged in a Gift Aid log which can be accessed from the Home page of Beacon by Treasurers and administrators.

Remember, if you are unsure about these features or any other element of Beacon, please visit the User Guide or the Help Desk. Both of these can be accessed via the Blue Widget at the bottom left of your Beacon screen.

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Message from Beacon National Support Lead (*continued*)

We are continuing to present User Specific Training through John Alexander and the Documentation and Training Team. These courses are very popular and are valuable to all, regardless of your current knowledge and I recommend them to you.

Lastly, I must tell you about our next major upgrade which is currently in testing. It is the change to the way we log in to the Members Portal. As you know that currently when we log in to the Members Portal we enter five pieces of personal information. This will soon be changing to entering a username and password. The username will be your email address and you will select your password the first time that you log in. If you use the Members Portal for checking Group information or renewing your membership, don't worry because after the change has been implemented you will still be able to log in the old fashioned way and you will then be asked to choose a password and from then on, the new login rules will apply.

I do hope that this has been informative and of interest. ***See the following article for more information.***

Frank Bailey

FURTHER INFORMATION

Gift Aid Enhancements

In early January we enhanced Beacon's support for Gift aid. In summary:

- Whenever the consent status of a member changes it is recorded in a new dedicated log. With the increase of consent being made on-line when members join and renew this will make it easier to monitor a member's consent history.
- The Membership Secretary can change the Gift Aid status of members directly from the renewals screen. This avoids having to update individual member records in advance.
- There is more comprehensive wording on the member's portal for consenting and the member must tick one of "consent" or "decline" before proceeding.
- If the Membership Secretary enters a "Gift Aid from" date there is a warning it won't change the status of historical transactions if the date is in the past.

For more details see the Help and Notifications article here:

<https://u3abeacon.zendesk.com/hc/en-gb/articles/8352696546717--Dep-10-Jan-2023-Gift-Aid-enhancements>

Graham Tigg

Migration & Software Specifying Team Lead

Recommendations / Suggestions

This was first mentioned in Edition 29 and is a reminder!

We are recommending that all users refresh themselves on how to send emails via Beacon, as there have been a couple of changes recently. You can watch a video and read up on this subject by following the link below.

[6.1.1 Sending Emails – u3a Beacon \(zendesk.com\)](#)

Please note that the following are suggestions only and are not compulsory

Over the past few months, several u3as have found themselves unexpectedly without a Beacon admin. There have been various reasons for this, sudden illness, the admin being unavailable due to family emergencies, long holidays etc. Although it isn't compulsory, we are recommending that u3a committees appoint a Deputy Beacon Administrator.

We have found that when emailing group members and you have a waiting list to join the group, those on the waiting list also receive the email. It has been suggested that instead of sorting through members and un-ticking the ones you do not want to receive the email, it would be a good idea to create a separate Group. Maybe call it, for example, History Waiting and make that a group solely for those on the waiting list to join. Once you have space in the original group it is easy enough to move people from one to the other.

Marian Luck

Admin & Recruitment Lead



Beacon Training using Zoom

You may well have seen the latest batch of Beacon Training released a short time ago. We had well over 350 applications so all courses were full within 48 hours.

Please accept our apologies that we could not take any more people so inevitably there are a number of disappointed Beacon users.

We plan to provide more courses. Our work is now centred on increasing the number of Supporters to run these courses. Our next set will be monthly courses for Site Admin, Group Coordinator, Treasurer and Membership Secretary. In addition, we have recognised the demand from Chairs and Vice-Chairs to have a better understanding of all facilities available in Beacon. We are therefore putting together a course designed to address this. This will allow u3as to decide if they want to expand their utilisation of Beacon.

As courses fill very quickly may we recommend that you apply immediately. This means that your Site Admin should send you our notice of courses as soon as they get them.

We are not operating a Waiting list so please do not apply until we release more dates.

Finally, may I assure you that we plan to continue giving these courses as we believe that the demand will continue as u3a committees change with time and as new features are added.

John Alexander

Documentation and Training Lead

Beacon Website

Some of you may have already noticed that the Beacon Website has moved to a different server and been upgraded. The website may look a little different but it does contain all the previous information.

The website utilises WordPress which is an open-source content management system, and will be maintained by the Communications Team using the Yootheme builder.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Who we are and what we do

| Name | Role |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Neil Stevenson | Team Leader |
| Tony Darbyshire | Webmaster |
| Malcolm Tulip | Newsletter & Website Support |

Beacon Communications Team



Neil Stevenson
Team Leader



Malcolm Tulip
Newsletter &
Website Support



Tony Darbyshire
Webmaster

BEACON WEBSITE

Beacon is a management system designed by u3as, for u3as. It provides a simple interface for managing members, groups and finances. Beacon is available to all u3as in the UK that wish to take advantage of it. More information about Beacon can be found through the link to the website.

The members of the editorial team are as follows:

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