u3a Beacon

BEACON NEWS

Edition: 38 **May 2024**

In this edition:

- Purpose of newsletter
- Message from National Support Lead
- Further Information
  - ⇒ Beacon Team—New Members
  - ⇒ Beacon Communications
  - ⇒ Beacon User Statistics
  - ⇒ Beacon Cookie Control
  - ⇒ Beacon Training
- Communications Team

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

Message from Beacon National Support Lead

Following my statement last month that we are about to begin the release of the first of the financial upgrades.

I can now tell you that we will deploy BT1775 - The ability to post pending transactions, on Tuesday 14th May. This change will also make it possible to set up a default account to be paid into when selecting the Method of Payment on the: Add New Member or Membership Renewal page. Training is available to help familiarise yourself with the use and the possibilities that this change brings. Please contact myself or John Alexander for presentation dates.

Our next financial update will be BT1778 - Enable Year End Balance Brought Forward for Groups. This is currently in user testing and should be ready for release by the end of the month.

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Message from Beacon National Support Lead (continued)

It is our aim to continuously improve your Beacon experience and to make Beacon a good place to be for all.

The team look forward to delivering many more useful updates in the near future.

Frank Bailey

Beacon Team - New Members

Welcome to the new members of the Beacon Team

Over the last couple of months, we have welcomed three new members onto the Beacon Team. They will help with a variety of roles. Pam Young will be mentoring u3as who wish to start using the Finance module after having been using Beacon for Membership, Groups etc. This can be tricky if a u3a has been using Beacon for a number of years as the ledgers all need to be reconciled before they start to use the finance section and this can throw up some difficulties. Pam is also a member of our Enhancement Team.

Ian Mathew has joined us as a member of the Training and Documentation Team and will be giving training sessions via Zoom. Adrian Ramsdale joined us a few months ago and is currently without portfolio. Rosie Alexander is the latest of our new members and will be helping with the Admin for the Training and Documentation Team. This entails booking people onto the training sessions they have applied for. This may sound easy, but when we get around 200-300 applications it does take some time. Believe me, I have been doing it along with one other colleague since we started the training sessions last year and we are very grateful for Rosie's help.

Marian Luck

Administration & Recruitment Lead

Beacon Team Communications

Communication is a key component of successful Provider (**Beacon Team**) / User (**u3a**) relationships. It's important that we maintain open lines of communication to ensure that both parties maintain positive relationships, gather and provide feedback to improve our system and processes.

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Beacon Team Communications (continued)

Below is a list of useful links provided by the Beacon Team for use by u3a members.

Description / Purpose	Link
Website Information about Beacon	beacon.u3a.org.uk/
Help Centre Technical Help	u3abeacon.zendesk.com
Users' Forum Post messages	forum.u3abeacon.org.uk/
Open a Support Ticket Technical Enquiry	u3abeacon.zendesk.com/hc/en-gb/requests/new
User Guide Guidance and Training on all aspects of using Beacon	u3abeacon.zendesk.com/categories/360001240017-User-Guide
Administration Login Access to Beacon System	u3abeacon.org.uk

Description / Purpose	Email Address / Phone Number
General Enquiry Non - Technical	info@beacon.u3a.org.uk
Administration & Training Book Training Sessions	admin@beacon.u3a.org.uk
Telephone Verbal contact	+44(0)208 466 6139

MS Teams / Zoom Video calls are used for meetings and training purposes with u3a members.

Beacon Zall emails are sent out to each u3a Site Administrator - the focal point for disseminating information.

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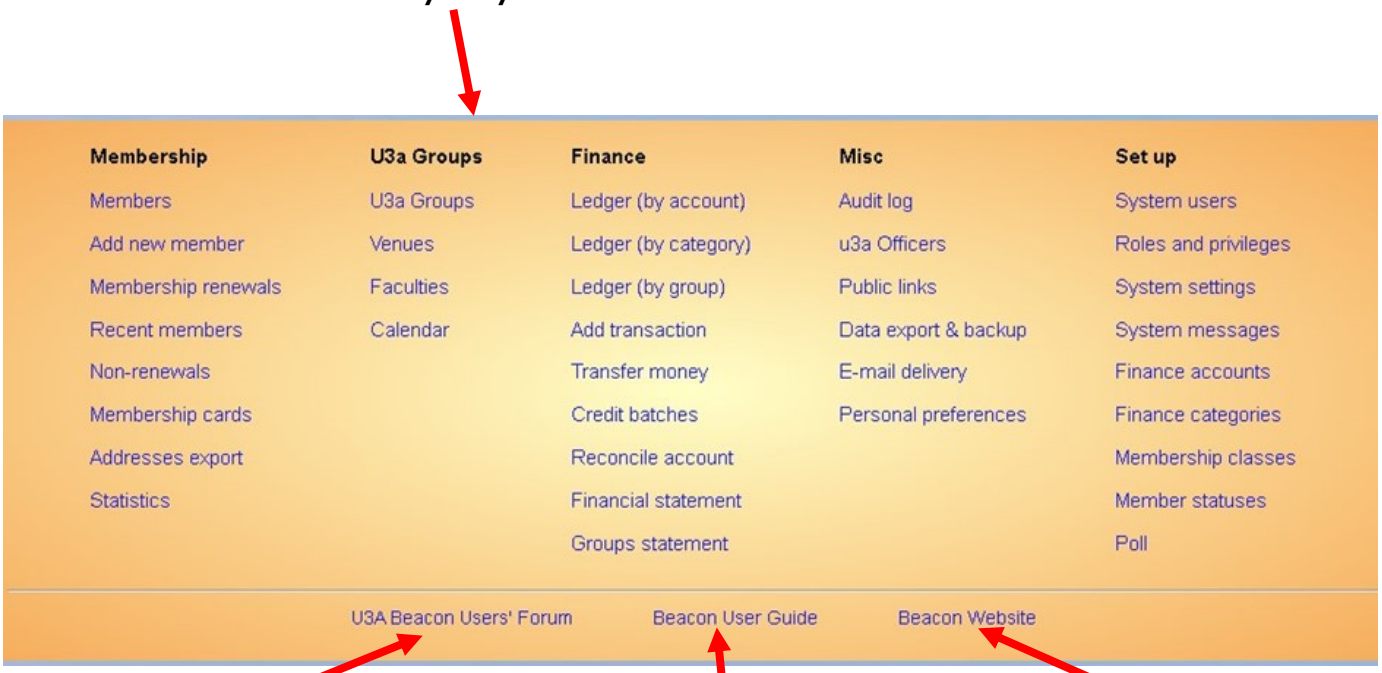
Beacon Team Communications (continued)

Beacon Administration u3abeacon.org.uk after login you will have access to the screen below followed by any Notices or Announcements.

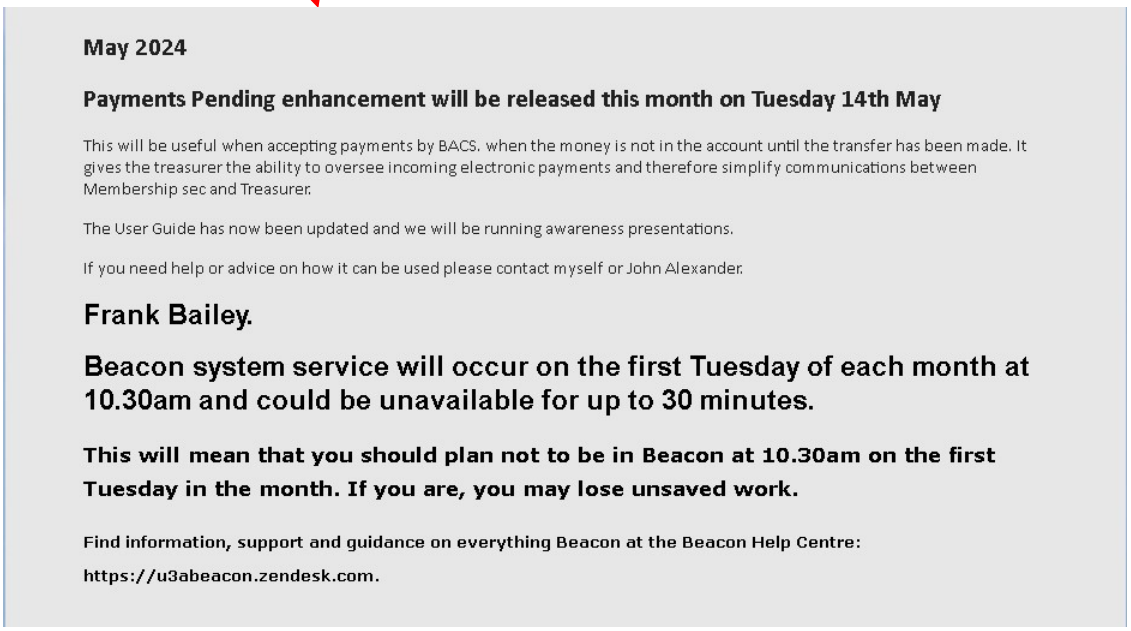


Beacon Users' Forum Beacon User Guide Beacon Website

Here you will also find links to those areas signposted above.

Please note: Other Beacon System Users who are not Site Administrators will see less menu selections.

Beacon Notices / Announcements (example)



May 2024

Payments Pending enhancement will be released this month on Tuesday 14th May

This will be useful when accepting payments by BACS. when the money is not in the account until the transfer has been made. It gives the treasurer the ability to oversee incoming electronic payments and therefore simplify communications between Membership sec and Treasurer.

The User Guide has now been updated and we will be running awareness presentations.

If you need help or advice on how it can be used please contact myself or John Alexander.

Frank Bailey.

Beacon system service will occur on the first Tuesday of each month at 10.30am and could be unavailable for up to 30 minutes.

This will mean that you should plan not to be in Beacon at 10.30am on the first Tuesday in the month. If you are, you may lose unsaved work.

Find information, support and guidance on everything Beacon at the Beacon Help Centre:

https://u3abeacon.zendesk.com.

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Beacon Team Communications (continued)

Beacon Help Button

The Help Button allows you to search for more information, this appears in the Help Centre and before log in on the Administration page.

Malcolm Tulip

Communications Team Lead

Beacon User Statistics

As of the 1st May 2024, the number of live sites and their members, are shown below.

u3as / Networks / Regions	Number
u3as using Beacon	584
Members in these u3as	270,255
Networks / Regions using Beacon	15
Members in these Networks / Regions	4,539

John Alexander

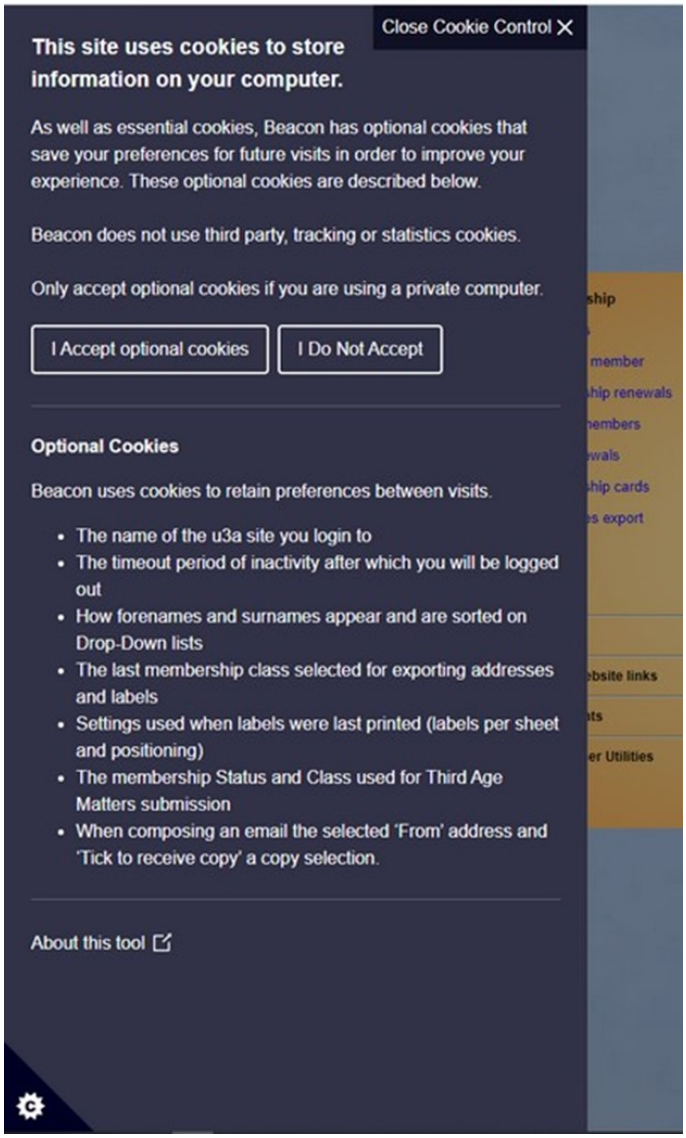
Training and Documentation Lead

Beacon Cookie Control

The Beacon login page is located at u3abeacon.org.uk

The first time you land on this page, and occasionally after that, the Cookie Control appears. It describes the optional cookies that your browser can store to remember a range of handy preferences for your next visit. If you are using a public or shared computer, always click "**I Do Not Accept**". Closing the control without making a choice is the equivalent of "**I Do Not Accept**".

You can open the cookie control at any time by clicking the cog in the black triangle located at the bottom left of every Beacon screen.



If you keep seeing the Cookie Control prompt on every page then your browser is blocking the cookie that remembers your choice. The Norton Antitrack browser add-on has been reported to do this.

Beacon Training

I thought it might be helpful to give an overview of who the courses are aimed at and a brief of what we aim to achieve.

Chairs and Vice Chairs "How to get more from your Beacon System"

For Chairs / Vice Chairs or those about to take on the role.

We aim to give an overview of facilities in Beacon that you might want to consider outside the basics (membership, groups).

We also give you details of statistics available from Beacon.

We do not provide training on how to be Chair or Vice Chair. This is the domain of the Third Age Trust.

Site Administrators (Site Admin)

For Beacon Site Administrators or those about to take on the role.

Aimed to give details of what a Site Administrator might need to know to carry out their role with respect to the Beacon System.

It is not for the people who just communicate with Members, Group Leaders and the Committee.

Membership Secretary

For Beacon Membership Secretaries or those about to take on the role.

Aimed to provide details of Membership, both new members and existing member renewals and associated details plus how to handle Lapsed and Resigned.

It does not cover on-line joining and renewals. We are creating a separate course for this.

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Beacon Training (continued)

Groups Coordinator

For the people in a u3a who manage all the Interest Groups.

Aimed to cover how you use Beacon to manage all of your groups and communicate with the group leaders.

It is not for leaders of individual groups. We are planning training videos as the number to be trained is more than we can sensibly handle.

Finance / Treasurers

For the Treasurer in a u3a who is either using the Finance or looking to start using it.

Aimed to cover setting it up, and day-to-day running as well as reporting and other financial aspects of the Beacon System.

Business Secretaries

For the people in a u3a who carry out communication with members and their committee.

We cover how to easily communicate via both email and letter with members.

General Information

All courses are held using Zoom. We are putting the PowerPoint slides that form the basis of these sessions on the Beacon website.

All courses must be booked in advance and we do not hold a waiting list.

If you have questions about these courses then please send me an email.

John Alexander email: john.alexander@beacon.u3a.org.uk

Training and Documentation Lead

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Who we are and what we do

Name	Role
Malcolm Tulip	Team Leader
A N Other	Newsletter & Website Administrator
A N Other	Website Support

Beacon Communications Team

Malcolm Tulip
Team Leader

A N Other
Newsletter &
Website
Administrator

A N Other
Website
Support

BEACON WEBSITE

Beacon is an on line 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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