

**Edition: 42****January 2025****In this edition:**

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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

Here we are, January 2025 with Beacon more than ten years in the field and my, hasn't the field grown in those years. From a simple three u3as in the beginning to 627 as of today. So has the Beacon programme grown, with ideas for development coming from all quarters? The Beacon team take these ideas and apply them to Beacon where possible. Initially, when looking at requests for changes to Beacon we look at where Beacon is not responsive or not performing as it should, and we treat these with the highest priority. With the remainder of the requests, we divide them into two groups: Those requests that are made to improve the user experience and help with simplifying navigation through screens and to simplify the presentation and collection of important data so that it is easy to use for all.

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Message from Beacon National Support Lead (continued)

There are also those requests that look for additional functionality. These requests are more difficult to manage as additional functionality for some means 'more complicated'. For the u3as that are comfortable with Beacon as it is, we always try to include an option button that will allow you to continue with Beacon without applying the additional features. During 2024 we have worked on improving the Financial Management within Beacon and will continue this by delivering a package of Financial Management reports in the first part of this year.

The Beacon Team continues to work hard to deliver these improvements and to support u3as and users when needed. I must myself thank all of the members of the Beacon Team for their hard work and commitment to making Beacon a simple, useful and user-friendly experience for many and for making it a pleasure for me to be involved in. Unfortunately, this year we have lost some of our team and the sudden death of Gary Nye in November came as quite a shock. He will be very much missed by all. I would like to welcome Phillip Dimsdale who joined the team in December and will take over Beacon user acceptance testing this year. In order to provide the best user support possible we are running an online Supporters Webcast on the 16th January for all our current Beacon Team. If you have not had your invite, please contact Marian Luck. (Beacon Team Members only).

Finally, although a little late, I would like to wish you and all Beacon users a Happy New Year for 2025.

Frank Bailey



FURTHER INFORMATION

Beacon Related Topics

User Guide

We are often puzzled at questions being asked when the answer is in the User Guide. Please check before asking a question as we aim to keep it up to date with all software changes.

Occasionally we see comments that the guide does not specifically cover. If this is the case please get in touch with me. The guide is constantly being updated but we don't always cover every aspect. Please help us, to help you, by letting us know these areas. We will promise to look at the comments and if we feel it may be helpful will implement a change.

I am looking to include Hints and Tips and Frequently Asked Questions in the guide. I would welcome thoughts, suggestions and hints and tips to include to help other users. Please just send to me at admin@beacon.u3a.org.uk.

Site Administrators

We still get frequent requests to change details or names of Site Administrators (Site Admin) in Beacon. There is a standard process to follow that applies to all changes to Site Admin. Please check in the User Guide. This makes sure that the information is updated in all Beacon-related areas.

Changes to your u3a website

With changes to u3as SiteWorks website URL we occasionally get emails asking us to update our records. The u3as website URL is in Beacon System Settings which the Site Admin can and should update.

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Beacon Related Topics (continued)

Deceased members

Each u3a may want to consider how they handle such past members. You should be aware of and adhere to your Privacy policy and GDPR. The key question, do you need this data?

There is an obvious exception with respect to Gift Aid.

You might anyway want to remove emails of such people to avoid the discomfort to a partner who could see an email to a deceased person.

In all cases the key guidance should be from the Third Age Trust.

Training

Despite my article last month the demand has been such that we are putting on a full schedule of training in January. Dates have been sent out. Your Site Admin has them.

Emails

We would like to remind all Beacon users of the need to make sure that they do not inadvertently share members' email addresses. This can be a breach of GDPR.

This can happen if you forward an email by copying into the Beacon system. Please check any email draft before sending to make sure it is correct.

John Alexander

Documentation and Training Lead

Beacon Team Communications

Below is a list of useful links for quick access by u3a members. These can also be found on the different pages of the Beacon website.

Description / Purpose	Link
Website	beacon.u3a.org.uk/
Help Centre	u3abeacon.zendesk.com
Users' Forum	forum.u3abeacon.org.uk/
Open a Support Ticket	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	+44(0)208 466 6139

Malcolm Tulip

Communications Team Lead

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Beacon Team Communications (continued)

Help us keep in touch with you all.

When you contact the Beacon Team can you please include your u3a's name in the subject line?

It helps us to identify who we are talking to out of the 627 u3as on Beacon.

It also helps us deal with any problems more quickly.

Thanks a lot.

John Hopkins

Journey and Migration Lead

Beacon User Statistics

As of the 4th January 2025, the number of live sites and their members, are shown below.

u3as / Networks / Regions	Number
u3as using Beacon	627
Members in these u3as	279,751
Networks / Regions using Beacon	18
Members in these Networks / Regions	4,725
u3as preparing to migrate to Beacon	7
u3as using Demo24 (Demonstration site) to investigate joining Beacon	52

John Alexander

Documentation and Training Lead

John Hopkins

Journey and Migration Lead

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Who we are and what we do

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

Beacon Communications Team



Malcolm Tulip
Team Leader



A N Other
Newsletter &
Website
Administrator



Graham Tigg
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:

Editor: Malcolm Tulip

Email: malcolm.tulip@beacon.u3a.org.uk

Proof Reader: Graham Tigg