

**Edition: 44****May 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

This month I would like to invite you all to join the Beacon Support and Enhancement Team so that we can maintain our help and support to all Beacon users.

Beacon continues to grow and with the growth comes the need to expand our support network. We are looking for volunteers to join our team who can write support documentation, which is required each time a software upgrade is implemented. We currently have a team of four volunteers managing this process. We would like to grow this team to provide user manual animations and video content to guide users through the various Beacon procedures.

The Documentation team also produce training material. You may be aware that we run up to eight Zoom training sessions per month focusing on how Beacon can be used to support the various officer positions in a u3a.

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Message from Beacon National Support Lead (continued)

If you have a training background why not drop us an email and get involved in both creation and delivery of the courses.

In order to make sure that anyone running into a problem when using Beacon can call for help, we have a Help Desk which is manned daily, including weekends. In order to sustain this we are looking for volunteers to share the load. It can be very fulfilling to give someone the key that unlocks the obstruction in their path.

And finally, before any software updates are released, we need to make sure that to the best of our knowledge it will work as specified and will not adversely affect any other part of the program. Sadly, at the end of last year, we lost one of our team members. His input was to manage testing and since his death we have been managing testing by sharing it within the Beacon Team. As testing requires a special type of person with focused enquiry skills, it would be great if we could find such a person from our Beacon users.

If you feel that you could help us with any of the above and would like to be involved please contact us using :- info@beacon.u3a.org.uk. We can send you descriptions of the work requirement. Come and join us, you will be made most welcome.

Frank Bailey



FURTHER INFORMATION

Beacon Hints and Tips

Site Admin

Two key points to remind you about:

1. To change the Site Admin there is a specific process to follow. Look in the User Guide Section 8.1 Here is a link: [8.1 The Site Administrator](#)
2. If you are a Site Admin please remember that you are the only point of contact that we have within the Beacon Team. It is essential to copy any members in your u3a using Beacon with the information we send including these Newsletters. Time is also important as some things like training dates are time critical.

Training

The demand for training is reducing slightly. We are therefore looking to reduce the frequency of some sessions.

This will mean better use of our resources but also more sessions are likely to fill up quickly.

Please note.

Whilst on this can I make a plea: in the email I send, I give broadbrush details of the content, the time span of sessions and very specific instructions on how to request a place.

This is to save our time and means that we can both get members onto the session that they want as quickly as possible.

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Beacon Hints and Tips (continued)

User Guide

Yes that again! I still get questions about printing it off. Yes this is possible, however a big note of caution, we are frequently updating articles in the guide to make sure that they align with updates to the software. These changes can occur weekly, April saw 4 changes.

If you do print an article off, then please check the online version if you refer to the printed copy after a week or so. Every article has Revision History at the bottom. This will save you possible confusion.

Gift Aid

Just to warn Treasurers, if you download the Gift Aid declaration and "Mark" the file on the screen, then this removes those names from all future downloads. This is to prevent you claiming twice for the same payment received. It has meant a few sites thinking that people have not been recorded.

Also some u3as have a Gift Aid POLL. We don't recommend this as it relies on manual updating. Use the Declaration and Gift Aid log as they are automatically updated when a member is renewed or a new person joins.

Another common problem is for Membership Secretaries / Treasurers to record renewals by posting a financial transaction. This is not the expected method and as such will mean the full recording is not done as the system is not designed for this method. It works with the process as documented in the User Guide.

Again the User Guide has details of how you should do these processes.

Membership Renewal: [4.5 Membership Renewals](#)

Add New Members: [4.3 Add New Member](#)

Beacon Hints and Tips (continued)

Beacon Invoice

Many of you will have these already, just to clarify the Third Age Trust use data we provide which is all members on your Beacon system on 31st March. This includes all classes of members unless they are lapsed, deceased etc. If a member is there and not renewed then they are included. It is £1 per member for the year from April. All training and support is not charged for.

There is also a Capitation, currently £4 per member, but this is totally separate and uses the number of members you provide to the Trust and does not have any relationship to Beacon numbers.

John Alexander

Training and Documentation Lead

Beacon User Statistics

As of the 1st May 2025, the number of live sites and their members, are shown below.

u3as / Networks / Regions	Number
u3as using Beacon	641
Members in these u3as	305,492
Networks / Regions using Beacon	18
u3as preparing to migrate to Beacon	4
u3as using Demo24/25(Demonstration site) to investigate joining Beacon	53

John Alexander

Training and Documentation Lead

John Hopkins

Support and Migration Lead

Beacon Support and Migration

We seem to have been having a quiet month recently with only a few u3a migrations to Beacon.

When Beacon started we had a nationwide demo called Demoton which every interested u3a had access to. As you can imagine this quickly got out of hand as everybody was adding their own members usually called something like Michael Mouse or Barbara Barbie or some character from history. I must admit I added Genghis Khan living in Yurt Road.

The best reaction to all of this was to create individual Demotons for each u3a. The problem with this was that the core version, which we copied rapidly, went out of date.

As you may have noticed when looking for your own Demo site we started to try to have an annual version and now you'll see Demo22, Demo24, and the latest as Demo25. The reason for this is that two of us are trying to run the demo site as a working u3a. To do this we add members, add finance transactions, create groups and do the annual membership renewal.

Any improvements that are made to the live Beacon sites are always replicated in the demo sites. This is all to try to make the demo site as current, up to date and as useful as possible.

Some of the supporters even have their own version of the demo site.

On a completely different subject, there are other websites that some u3as use to manage their data. Some of these are Wild Apricot, Simple Membership and U3A Web. Interestingly, some of the u3as that use these are now slowly moving over to Beacon as they see the benefits in terms of usability, support and cost.

John Hopkins

Support 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:

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