u3a Beacon

BEACON *NEWS*

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In this edition:

- Purpose of newsletter

- Message from National Support Lead

- Further Information

  ⇒ The Beacon Journey

  ⇒ Beacon Training Plans

  ⇒ Beacon Finance – A thank you to our Documentation and Training Lead

- Communications Team

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

Message from Beacon National Support Lead

Beacon continues to develop and following requests from members, we have introduced changes to the way Members log into the Members Portal.

Previously logging into the portal was enabled using five items of personal data: Membership Number, First Name, Last Name and Postcode.

Going forward everyone will use his or her email address as user name and a password of their own choosing. This change applies to all logging in to the link to Beacon, via the Members area of your u3a Website.

Please do not forget that you can get help if the link does not seem to work for you.

Message from Beacon National Support Lead (continued)

The help widget can be found at the bottom left hand corner of every Beacon page. Starting with the pre Logon Page – https://u3abeacon.org.uk.

Click on the blue 'Help' icon in the bottom left hand corner and type in: "members portal" follow the directions displayed.

The next upgrade at the end of May will be to improve Membership Card Production and enable the emailing of Membership Cards.

The Beacon Team will continue to work on beacon improvements to make your Beacon experience better.

Frank Bailey

The Beacon Journey

We provide help and support every step of the way.

The journey usually starts with a local officer hearing about this thing called Beacon. They ask other u3as or write to us and we can start them on the road. We can provide each u3a with their own working demo site to explore called Demo22. There is a User Guide accessed through a 'Help' icon on the bottom left of every screen. This includes text, screen shots, slides and videos covering every aspect of Beacon.

We have an excellent team of Supporters to help u3as learn about Beacon. At this point we assign one of them to liaise with the local u3a.

Before Covid, we tried to have local Supporters all over the country who would visit u3as. Now that we have all had to become used to using Zoom our Supporters can help u3as anywhere in the country.

If the u3a wants to join Beacon, we ask them to sign two documents covering the legalities of using the software then we give them an empty template to add their data to. If this is a problem for anyone, we have a team of Migrators who will help or move their data for them.

The Migrators take the data and make a live Beacon site for the u3a. The Supporter stays assigned to that u3a for 3 months after going live to help with any issues that arise.

We now have more than 540 u3as and 16 Networks on Beacon. This includes 17 u3as and 1 Network that have joined since the New Year.

On top of this 39 u3as are evaluating Beacon. As I manage the journey for u3as exploring Beacon I know that it is very rare for any u3a to decide against Beacon once they have used their free Demo22 site.

The Beacon Journey (continued)

Established Beacon u3as will be familiar with the original Demoton, many use it as an aid to passing on Beacon roles to new users away from live data. Demo22 is an upgraded version with fresh fictitious data to keep it current. u3as still on Demoton can request a Demo22 site by raising a support ticket – click on the 'Help' icon and search for "support".

There are now so many u3as on Beacon that a new route has opened up – that of word of mouth from one u3a to another.

If you want to know more about Beacon ask in your network or region or mail us at info@beacon.u3a.org.uk .

John Hopkins

Beacon Journey Team Leader

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Beacon Training Plans

Currently we are completing the scheduled training sessions running till late June. We are very conscious that we have a large demand that we are not addressing. I would like to say sorry but we are limited in our resource and are aware of this and trying to expand the number of courses. We are currently planning the schedule for September 2023 onwards.

To help address some of the demand we are going to run a Zoom Question and Answer on 22nd June. A panel of experienced Beacon team members will answer these questions.

We will have Breakout rooms for Treasurer, Site Admin, Membership Secretary and Group Coordinator so their questions can be addressed.

We will invite people to apply and send a specific question. We will then group the questions into sets of each type. We will send, to those coming, a Zoom invite. We will have at least 30 places for each discipline plus a general session.

In taking applications we will prioritise those who have not been on any of our courses so far.

We only have capacity to store one contact per site, your Site Administrator, so they receive all of our communications. Please make sure they pass on course notifications quickly. History shows that spaces go quickly, often within 72 hours.

Please only apply to the email detailed in our announcement. Any others will not be processed.

Thanks

John Alexander

Documentation and Training Lead

Beacon Finance – A thank you to our Documentation and Training Lead

Having made contact with you previously regarding our finance details being entered onto Beacon and also the reconciliation of previous years that had never been carried out, I wanted to let you know that we have now reconciled previous years and are using Beacon for our Finance 2022/23.

I was most pleased with your advice and suggestions. It is a very simple process recording all our finance and downloading a monthly report for committee approval.

I'm looking forward to finalising our account at year end, it certainly won't be a time-consuming process that I once thought it would be.

In my previous work I was an Accountant, but I really think that most people from u3a, without having a finance background, could enter the income and expenditure onto Beacon.

Thank you very much for your help and support in getting us up and running successfully on Beacon.

I intend to write some user notes for Beacon Finance as part of our review of our u3a's Finance Policy.

Also worth mentioning is that our Membership Secretary, who is also new to using Beacon, has been referring to the helpful guidance on the website to manage our u3a membership.

Janice

Treasurer for Lancing and Sompting u3a

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Footnote from John Alexander:

Please see next page for further information on Finance Training.

Beacon Finance Training

Beacon Finance Training course slides can be viewed on the Beacon website at:

[Beacon Training – PDFs](#) where you will also find course slides for:

- Membership Secretary

- Beacon Expansion

- Groups

John Alexander

Documentation and Training Lead

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COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Who we are and what we do

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

Beacon CommunicationsTeam

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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