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

Share your hints and tips: Group Leaders

Many u3as struggle to get (interest) group leaders to engage with Beacon. Some are happy to, others might be nervous and a few just don't want to. We're piloting some Beacon team training and support resources for group leaders at the moment, but we've also had feedback that group coordinators and site admins are looking for advice.

So if you've tried to get your group leaders to use Beacon, have you got any success stories you could share? Or even something that just didn't work? Please send any ideas, hints or tips to info@beacon.u3a.org.uk and we'll put together a guide to share with you.



Beacon development

The software contractors have been very busy with upgrades. Typically about 40% of development time should be spent on keeping the technical infrastructure updated. In the past year, more time was spent on the front-end so we've been focussing on reducing that tech debt now before we move back to a balanced approach of technical and feature improvements.

Completed

Security upgrades and technical updates following advised improvements from the penetration testing.

Now

- Further updates of libraries and components
- Gift Aid improvements: updating code and retesting

Next

PayPal integration improvement

IMPORTANT security improvement: session cessation

****This is likely to impact users****

A recommendation from the penetration testing was to improve the automatic logging out due to inactivity. The initial investigation to this showed some contradictory behaviour so we have made these settings more consistent.

An individual user can set their own preference for timeout. However, despite there appearing to be the option currently to set this to 99 minutes, the maximum was actually only 20 minutes. If you've ever lost the contents of an email you were writing, you'll know that this is a relatively short time and is why we recommend drafting emails externally. However, due to the way the setting was being processed, users can sometimes reopen Beacon after this time without needing to log in again.

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Beacon development (continued)

Once we release this security improvement, this will no longer be possible. Users are likely to notice this as once logged out, users will need to log in fully again. However, we have also taken the opportunity to increase the maximum time of inactivity of a session to 40 minutes. Hopefully that will help reduce the number of lost email drafts or unsaved changes while we also improve the security of Beacon.

Please note: as the data controller, your u3a committee may wish to set your own rules about the maximum session duration, particularly for Beacon site admins. Please pass this information on.

Gift Aid feature

Since the Gift Aid improvement work was paused, there have been multiple releases to production. This means that the developers need to check the code and make any changes before we re-test everything. It's hoped that this will be released by the end of May. In the meantime, Gift Aid should continue to be used as normal.

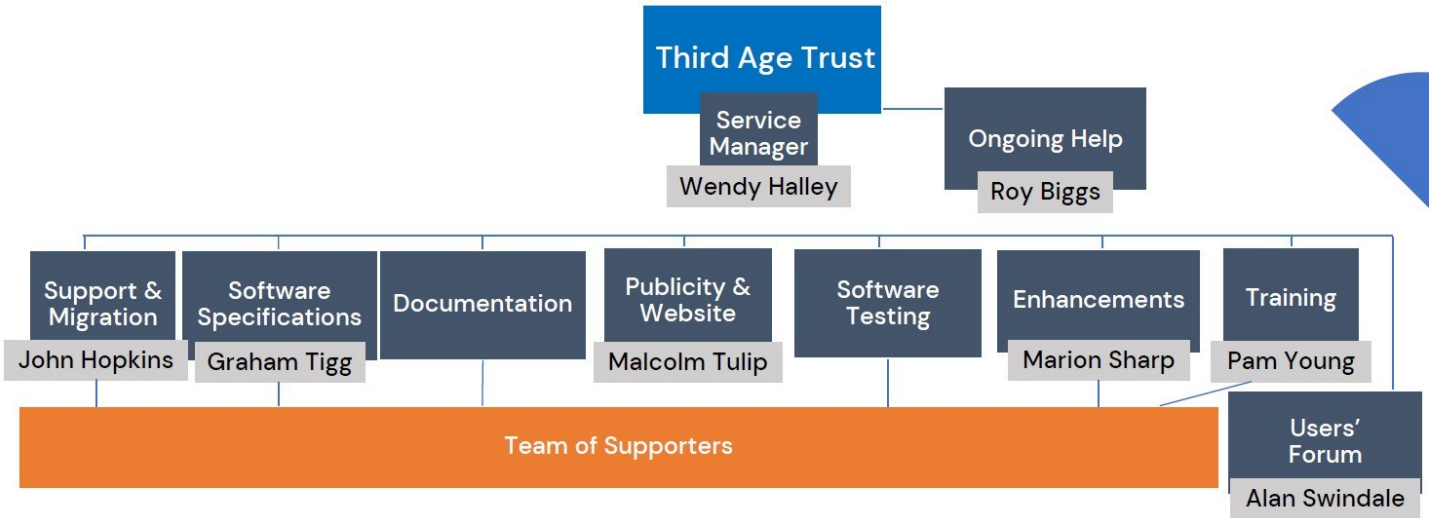
In summary, the changes will:

- Add a new setting to allow for partial gift aid eligibility for each membership class (including by month)
- Update wording for new members, to include Gift Aid eligible figure
- Display Gift Aid eligible figure to renewing members previously opted into Gift Aid
- New token to support the provision of Gift Aid eligible payment amounts within emails/mail merge for each member

BEACON TEAM

Who we are and what we do

Beacon Team Structure



Individuals can have multiple roles and hence be in several Supporter roles

[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/Networks/Regions in the UK that wish to take advantage of it. More information about Beacon can be found through the link to the website.

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