

Update to SiteBuilder Web Managers – April 2023

We would like to thank all those u3as who responded to the request to share contact details with the SiteWorks project team.

The Alpha testing stage of the project, is now complete and the **Beta testing phase with 20 pioneer u3as has begun.**

A '**Starter Site**' version is still under development and testing will follow.

When it is ready for distribution, it will be made available to new '**start-up u3as**' and to u3as who do not want or need to migrate data from a SiteBuilder site.

u3a SiteWorks was upgraded to WordPress v. 6.2 at the end of March. The Beta version of WordPress will be issued to the pioneers once any bugs have been fixed.

Hosting: Arrangements have been made to set up 10 testing sites and a first batch of 100 production sites using the same hosting supplier as Beacon and approval is being sought to continue with them. A website management tool will be required to handle the automated implementation of system-wide upgrades in the future.

Prioritisation: Despite the apparent straightforward design of SiteBuilder, many u3as have been able to add their own features. This means not all websites will migrate in exactly the same way. This is why it is important for us to obtain an up-to-date list of SiteBuilder u3a web managers.

Training: A great deal of work has been, and is being, undertaken to set up training materials. Some of these are published on the SiteWorks website. One challenge will be to keep it up to date whenever an update is released centrally by WordPress (about 2-3 times per year)

One of our volunteers who has a teaching background has offered to give 28 training sessions to groups of 20-25 people from u3as. The purpose of the training programme is to familiarise u3a web managers with the new WordPress environment before migration and to assist them in the migration process.

Resources and Volunteering

Despite having over 70 volunteers we still need expertise to co-ordinate or lead in several areas including:

1. Training and Documentation lead
2. Risk management lead



3. Migration engagement coordinator
4. Migration queue coordinator
5. Open project coordinator
6. Resources coordinator

All volunteers will be required to register as a Trust Volunteer and attend a 2 hour Zoom induction session, this is a Third Age Trust insurance requirement.

If you have technical skills, organisational skills, communication skills or experience using WordPress and would like to volunteer in the project, please contact – chris.winner@u3a.org.uk

Implementation

We expect the process to be along these lines.

In the months ahead, volunteers from the Migration team will contact all SiteBuilder web managers to agree a migration sequence number. Your u3a will be added to the migration schedule. A few weeks before your migration date, we will add the names of your web managers and their nominees to the training and induction timetable and you will be allocated dedicated migration support. Our support teams will then provide documentation, training, FAQs and a Help Desk.

N.B. The SiteWorks Team reserves the right to modify the process as our learning and experience builds up.

Other Information

Every u3a SiteWorks website is expected to use only the approved software and plugins. We appreciate that this may be frustrating at first for some u3as, but going forward, it is planned to have a programme of rolling improvements, once most sites have been migrated. It is hoped that eventually it will be possible to link into Beacon.

It has to be noted that there is nothing to prevent an existing u3a that currently uses SiteBuilder website from converting or migrating to an entirely different supplier outside the SiteWorks programme.

The u3a theme and plugins can be made available to u3as who wish to do this although only limited support will be available as our focus will be on those who want to migrate from SiteBuilder to the new u3a SiteWorks system.

If you have any questions, please visit the FAQ page on this website [FAQs – SiteWorks \(u3a.org.uk\)](https://u3a.org.uk/FAQs-SiteWorks)