u3a siteworks News Bulletin

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SiteWorks is moving forward

The latest figures (week commencing 11 March) show we have sent out 483 Terms and Conditions requests with the remaining 117 u3as to invite over the next month. 313 have signed and are in the training & migration process with 119 invited to book themselves onto a Zoom Introduction to Training & Migration session or have already booked their places. 148 are in the learning and migration stage, and 47 have live sites.

If any u3a has not yet registered then they should complete the form at the top of this page https://siteworks.u3a.org.uk/

The map shows live sites on this page https://siteworks.u3a.org.uk/current/live-sites/

Tips for planning your new SiteWorks website

As a web manager you will know your way around your site, perhaps be a technical whizz and have a good idea of how to publish online. But … there is so much more to running a website as a communication channel and it needs to become a team effort if it is to thrive and be effective.

A website is a place to educate audiences, create brand awareness, spread word-of-mouth, and build relationships with users.

Many of you will be waiting to get started on learning SiteWorks and the team are ready to welcome you on that journey. In advance of being invited to the Introduction to Training and Migration session there are several things you can be doing in your u3a to prepare.

- The most important is to engage your committee, group leaders and members from the outset and carry them along during the process.

- Review your existing content – is it being viewed? Is it relevant? Is it out-of-date? Is it duplicated across your site?

- Are you trying to address lots of issues together on one page? Consider breaking up content into bite size chunks to ease readability and understanding.

- SiteWorks offers opportunities to use content and visuals in a more engaging way so refreshing your image library will also be worthwhile.

- If your current website structure is centred around your u3a structure, consider a visitor centric approach. How do visitors currently navigate around your site? How easy is it for them to find information?

- Do you have members with special needs – how would they like to interact with your website?

The website is not your solo project (unless you have been given autonomy). It is most likely being managed on behalf of your u3a committee and all of your u3a members. It is important to engage with your committee to determine what they want their new shop window to look like. It will save you some time when it comes to designing your new look site and getting their approval to launch it.
Here are some areas/questions you might want to use to open the discussion:

- Who are the audience of existing and potential members? What do they look like? What could they look like?

- What are your u3as objectives for the year ahead? Is there a plan for delivering these objectives or goals and what opportunities will there be for communicating outcomes?

- Delivery expectations – are there resource and/or time availability constraints?

- How are group leaders and others going to engage with editing or content supply to the website?

- What feedback has been received from members – after all it is for them?

- Who is your local competition for attracting new members?

- Roles and responsibilities of all in delivering and maintaining the new site?

We hope this information is helpful.

A gentle reminder about backing-up data

u3a website managers are undoubtedly concerned that there should be reliable backups of their site, with some remembering the serious loss of data that happened with Site Builder a couple of years ago.

All websites hosted using the Trust's SiteWorks project hosting service are backed up on a daily basis. The backup system used is JetBackup 5 configured to create both on-site and off-site backups. Access to on-site backups is faster and so these would normally be used in the event of needing to restore a site. Off-site backups provide an additional layer of safety in the event of a serious failure with the on-site systems. The systems have all been thoroughly tested.

One of the SiteWorks Terms and Conditions states that the hosting server will not store backups created by WordPress plugins.

The use by u3as of additional backup plugins take up more storage space on the server. A file of roughly the same size as the current website is created for each backup made by such plugins. Just three backups on the server of a website are now no longer around 600MB but now requires 2.4GB of storage - the 600MB of the live site plus three 600MB backup files.

Of those u3a websites currently "live" on SiteWorks project hosting the typical storage used is between 300MB and 600MB, the majority of this being taken up by photos. This will certainly grow over time.

Providing storage for on-site and off-site backups has associated costs. In sizing and costing the storage requirements for the project we have allowed for storage to grow over time. However, to optimise performance and avoid the need for increased costs we ask you not to unnecessarily increase the storage.

The options for creating an additional backup include backing up to a cloud storage service such as Google Drive, DropBox, Amazon S3 or similar.

Finally … A Warning on Adding Plugins

Before experimenting with additional plugins please ensure that the functionality or data collection of any plugin does not infringe or impact either the SiteWorks Terms and Conditions and/or your website Privacy Notice.

If you need more advice on any of the items mentioned visit the SiteWorks website https://siteworks.u3a.org.uk/ where you can also contact us.