

SiteWorks Bulletin September 2024 - draft

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SiteWorks Progress

SiteWorks migration has essentially been running for seven months with barely three to go. The headline figure for live SiteWorks sites in early September shows that around half of the Site Builder sites now have live sites. We can't conclude from this that the migration is only half way through.

Consider a real-life illustration. There is a local housing development in your area for 20 new houses. For logistical reasons, work on all the plots didn't start at the same time. Nevertheless, the builders are confident the job will be finished by Christmas, just 10 months after work started. It's September and some observers have noted that only 10 houses are occupied.

Those who actually visit the site see that in addition to these 10, the majority of the rest are well advanced. Four are essentially complete but haven't been connected to the grid. A couple of others are being re-decorated or having the garden landscaped. Only one plot hasn't been started after a survey revealed archaeological artifacts that await investigation.

The serious message from the SiteWorks team is please don't leave working on your new site until the last minute. If you are having issues then please keep communicating with us.

Graham Tigg, SiteWorks Migration Lead

Since the last bulletin a further 100 SiteWorks sites have gone live with over 150 more close behind.

I&E Team

SiteWorks records updates

Please can all Web Managers/Assistant Web Managers registered with the SiteWorks programme keep their contact details up-to-date and check junk mail from time to time for mails from us. This is important even once you have your new SiteWorks site up and working as this is how we contact you. We send bulletins like this one, product updates, updates to workbooks and guides, and more but they won't reach you unless we know where you are. If you are changing any of your details then please use the form at the top of this SiteWorks website page -

<https://siteworks.u3a.org.uk/>

I&E Team

Change Board updates

There are three change board points for this bulletin:

1. The core plugin has been updated to resolve an issue with the filtering of categories within an event list.
2. An additional feature to provide the capability for web managers to add multiple contact forms designs to a site (e.g. one for the committee, another for membership), has been released.
3. At the WMUG on the 10 September, the question of margins on mobile phones was raised, this has been added for inclusion in the next update to the theme.

Redirection and broken links

If you move it is usual to get the Post Office to redirect post for a limited time to your new abode. After that, Post Office mail is unlikely to reach you and may well be returned to the sender. The Internet equivalent of this is website address redirection and, when your browser returns can't reach site or page not found, broken links.

When your SiteWorks site goes or went live you send a request to the Site Builder team to setup a redirection from your Site Builder site to SiteWorks. This means that visitors to your old site will automatically be taken to SiteWorks.

There is a need to identify links to your Site Builder site from other websites and get them corrected. These will be broken links once the three month re-direction ends.

A member of the SiteWorks team from the North West has done investigations and the North West Region site <https://u3asites.org.uk/north-west/members> recently had 29 broken or redirected links to Site Builder. We expect other regional sites to yield similar results.

Instructions on how to identify these links are included in the Go-live checklist and are also available on the website as a Blog article here <https://siteworks.u3a.org.uk/broken-links-to-your-live-site/>

Graham Tigg, SiteWorks Migration Lead

Choosing plugins

One of the great strengths of WordPress is the support for plugins that can add new functionality to your website. There are thousands available, so how do you choose? The WordPress plugin directory provides a lot of information that can inform your choice.

- Check the number of active installations

Plugins that are widely used are more likely to be robust and well supported. If a plugin has over 100,000 installations then plenty of other WordPress administrators must be happy that it does the job.

- Check the plugin reviews

OK, we all know that reviews can't always be taken at face value, but reading some of the lower rating reviews may show any shortcomings of the plugin.

- Check when the plugin was last updated

WordPress has been around for 20 years, and a plugin not changed for 10 years is still likely to work, so don't dismiss a plugin if it has not been updated in the past few weeks. However a plugin that is not recently updated may no longer be supported by the developers so read the Support enquiries for evidence.

- Always test the plugin on a development system

There are so many plugins available that not it's not possible to test all possible combinations of plugin and some plugins may not play well together. This can lead to all kinds of problems with a website that can be difficult to rectify other than through restoring from a backup. Removing an unwanted or misbehaving plugin does not necessarily remove any database changes, settings or files that it created. For these reasons you should never try out plugins on a production website.

- Use the u3aWPdev forum to share experience

The "What we've used..." section of the forum is there to share experience, good or bad, of using plugins. Look there for recommendations and to share your own experience.

Developing for SiteWorks

Just like WordPress, all the SiteWorks plugins have been developed as a collaborative open source project. There is now a new section of the u3aWPdev forum dedicated to helping anyone with some web development experience to learn how to safely add new functionality to a WordPress site.

The first few 'sticky' posts in the new forum provide advice on how to get started writing plugins for your site, and there are a few examples of plugins that have been written to work with SiteWorks. If you are interested in adding new functionality to your SiteWorks site check out this new forum section.

A Day in the Life of a Migrator

Yate and Sodbury now where is that? Let me find it on a map
Strange place names seem to come my way almost every other day,
The groups I see, well there's a thing, Now where on earth do I begin?
There's a hut in Scotland where they taste gin.
Whiskey and wine groups both have a nice ring
New Testament Greek? Just what I seek
There's Orienteering with maps and all and another group called Pickleball
A Migrator's day is full of quirks, all because of our SiteWorks.

Written by one of the Migration team

The SiteWorks Team

