

# SiteWorks Newsletter September/October 2025

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This newsletter is distributed to SiteWorks Web Managers (WMs) who are registered with us. We can optionally hold a second contact (Assistant WMs).

Do pass this link on to your SiteWorks users and others who contribute content.

To update our records, please use the form available by clicking the button on our homepage at <https://siteworks.u3a.org.uk>.

Historically, I sent out a Newsletter monthly, but it makes sense to send one when there is content to communicate.

## How do we contact you?

There are three ways the SiteWorks volunteer team contacts you:

1. You are a “User” with the role “Administrator” of your SiteWorks site.
2. You are registered with us as a Web Manager (WM) or Assistant Web Manager (AWM) using the form on our homepage <https://siteworks.u3a.org.uk>
3. You raise a Help Desk query (see our homepage) or contact [info@siteworks.u3a.org.uk](mailto:info@siteworks.u3a.org.uk)

Our Sysadmin team will email all administrators of a single site regarding operational matters. In the main, these will be heads-up about plugins you have installed, or perhaps you are storing videos or backups on your site.

The WM and AWM contact will usually, but not necessarily, also be Administrators. We use these for general communications, distributing this newsletter, sending reminders about drop-ins, and addressing other operational matters, such as server maintenance or WordPress releases.

Anyone can raise a Help Desk ticket or email info@, and we only correspond with the email address on the ticket. Generally, a Help Desk ticket is better all-around as it is monitored by a team and is tracked. In some circumstances we may verify the submitter's identity with the Trust.

## Forms Drop-in Questions and Answers

I hosted an extra Drop-in session on 29<sup>th</sup> September dedicated to Forms. Attendance peaked at 110, so well over 10% of all SiteWorks sites would have been represented. A big thank you to Andy Lynam and Gary Russell for demonstrating WPForms and Contact Form 7, respectively. These two were selected as they are the most popular with SiteWorks sites.

The consensus of the meeting is that Contact Form 7 has a steeper learning curve than WPForms. Therefore, consider WPForms first to see if it meets your needs. One caveat is that some features of WPForms require the paid version.

I have collated most of the questions from the session and added answers. They can be found at the end of this Newsletter.

## Text as part of Images – avoid

We want to highlight an issue that we attempted to address during the migration from Site Builder, but which appears to be resurfacing on SiteWorks sites.

We have observed that an increasing number of sites are using images that contain text as part of the image. These are typically produced by graphic design or photo editing applications, or even something as basic as Windows Paint. The text in such images becomes part of the image and is effectively just a "bunch of dots". If you can't select the text on an image, then it's "just dots" and not a caption.

Here is an example, and yes, you can't tell that the text isn't an overlay:



There are three problems with having text as part of images:

1. First, and most important, is the accessibility issue. Speech readers can't pick out text on images, so anyone who relies on this assistive technology will receive no information from these images.
2. Secondly, text in images does not scale. With the example above, it could be hard or impossible to read on smaller smartphone screens.
3. Thirdly, search engines will not process text in images. If the only reference to the name of the u3a is an image logo, there is nothing to tell the search engines that this page relates to 'Sometown u3a'.

Where text is required over an image, it should be overlaid on top of it. WordPress provides plenty of tools to achieve this; a Cover block is the apparent method to check first.

## Minor release for SiteWorks Core

These fixes have been deployed:

OpenProject #1137: Bug fix to ensure the Group category with “&” will be displayed in the Filtered Group List

OpenProject #1142: Bug fix to ensure that the Notice block Title does not disappear when there are no notices to be displayed.

OpenProject #1145: Bug fix to resolve an issue when the Event list display breaks if an event uses an Excerpt containing <p> tags

OpenProject #1149: Bug fix to resolve the incorrect behaviour of “Show group events”.

## SiteWorks drop-in on forms – questions from chat answered.

WPForms (WPF) and Contact Form 7 (CF7) were demonstrated.



### Form Functionality & User Experience

- **Can a user save the form after completing it?**

Both WPF and CF7 can copy the submitter in the email generated by the form.

The form page can be saved by their browser (typically ‘Save Page as...’)

- **Can you use a shortcode instead of HTML for an email address?**

Yes – WPF Email Smart Tag,

- **How do you add Gift Aid and other text further down the form?**

The form is placed on a SiteWorks Page, and the usual blocks can be added around it – such as paragraphs, images, columns, etc.

- **How does the submitted form appear to the recipient—structured form or stream of text?**

Generally, one line per form item, starting with a description of the field. If the form item is multiline, then these are replicated in the email. Essentially, it will be pretty tricky to parse automatically.

With WPForms the submissions can be downloaded to a spreadsheet.

CF7 can do similar, but requires a separate plugin.

- **Can I embed the form into a current tab as a button, or must it be on a new tab?**

A button could open the Page on your SiteWorks site with the form.

Essentially, a button can navigate in the same way as menu entries.

- **Does the form provide an audit trail for Gift Aid tick boxes?**  
For CF7, you will need to keep the emails. With WPF, there is an additional option to keep the downloaded submissions.
- **Is there a signature option for the Gift Aid agreement?**  
No, and this has never been a requirement (see the paper forms provided by the Trust). Ensure the member must opt in, and the default isn't to donate. Keep the email or submissions log.
- **How long do forms remain on the website?**  
Until you delete them, if the content is essential (such as Gift Aid), download it regularly and store it offline. Please note that site backups are only available for approximately one week.

### **Form Submission & Processing**

- **How do we access the forms to process them into Beacon?**  
Emails or download spreadsheets as above. Essentially, consider them as an alternative to paper or PDF forms.
- **Who receives the form once submitted—committee or membership?**  
Emails can be sent to any contacts, including the person who submitted the form.  
NOTE – For CF7, do not use the tag [your-email] in the email template's To, Cc, or Bcc header fields. It is replaced with an actual email address that the user inputs. This means that a malicious user could use the form to send spam or phishing emails. This will quickly lead to SiteWorks having a reputation as a source of spam and give us all email delivery issues..
- **Can submitted results be sent to multiple email addresses?**  
Yes
- **Is there a way to include submitted details in the “thank you” email?**  
When the form is submitted, the submitter can automatically receive a copy. The confirmation email with WPF can also pull in responses using tags.  
With CF7, there is a 'Mail (2)' template for an email sent to the submitter, but that will be a second email and needs to refer to the content of the original email.  
Another approach is to put the text “Thank you for completing our form” above the Submit button.
- **Can you copy an existing form into WPForms and customise it?**  
WPF can be duplicated on the same site or exported and imported.

CF7 can be duplicated. The form content can be copied/pasted to another site, e.g., a Local WP site to a live SiteWorks site.

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## Privacy & Security

- **Should bank details be included on the website?**  
Many u3as do this for their u3a bank account.
- **How can anonymity be maintained for email addresses?**  
Presumably, this means the email address of the submitter. It will be visible to the recipient of the email generated when the form is submitted. It will also be in any submission files/logs.
- **Is it safe to use WPForms with sensitive data?**  
It's as safe as email. Okay for contact details, but probably not card numbers, login details, or passwords.

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## Plugins & Tools

- **Why isn't the paid version of WPForms part of the standard u3a dashboard?**  
Several reasons. It would need volunteers to support it formally. The costs would be shared among all sites, and most sites would not use it. The extension of SiteWorks (and Beacon) is under review by the Trust.
- **Is WPForms more user-friendly than other plugins?**  
According to comments, WPF is more user-friendly than CF7, which utilises a markup language and shortcode syntax. CF7 is more powerful in many areas, at least when comparing free versions.  
Try them both on Local WP. The consensus is that CF7 has a steeper learning curve, so if you only look at one, see if WPF meets your needs.
- **What are the pros and cons of Forminator and Contact Form 7?**  
We don't know. Try asking on the u3a WordPress forum or install them both on Local WP and see which one best meets your requirements.
- **Is there a template form available on the u3a site?**  
No, not yet. If u3as submit them they could go in the "How tos" section.
- **Can fillable PDFs (e.g. via DocFly) be a viable alternative?**  
DocFly is an online editor that allows you to create PDF forms and more. With a PDF form (or Word form), the submitter must send it to the u3a, of course.

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## Payments & Beacon Integration

- **Is Beacon capable of handling online membership forms and payments?**  
Yes, using PayPal (accepts Credit/Debit cards).
- **What are the transaction fees for payment processors like GoCardless?**  
Visit their websites to review their fee structure. Check whether they have deals for Charities.
- **Is Beacon accessible to potential new members?**  
SiteWorks provides a web presence for u3as to attract new members. Prospective members can be directed (a link) to Beacon to enrol.
- **Is a website form still needed if Beacon handles applications?**  
Many Beacon u3as don't have the portal for online joining/renewal enabled. A website form for membership will be an improvement over a fillable Word/PDF document and paper forms. However, the Membership Secretary will still need to enter details into Beacon or other membership record systems.

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