

SiteWorks Newsletter December 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 launched by clicking the button on our homepage at <https://siteworks.u3a.org.uk>.

Exemplar sites sought

Phil from Rutland contacted us with this request:

I am trying to 'nudge' our committee to view the Website as a more strategic tool for promoting us. This has challenges!

A frequent comment is that they don't know what is possible, so my query/request is whether we could have a list of 'exemplar' u3as who have done great things with their SiteWorks website.

I'm sure u3as would like to share all the great things that they've done already, and get some publicity for all their hard work.

Please email info@siteworks.u3a.org.uk if you think your site will inspire Rutland u3a and others.

Logging out quirks

A user has commented that after logging out of SiteWorks they can reopen pages and see content. This behaviour will be a combination of what is stored in your browser's cache and interaction between your browser and the SiteWorks WordPress server. Bear in mind most of the content is publicly available, the media items and pages for example, so doesn't require being logged in to view.

If you are using a public or shared computer then it would be good practice to clear the browser’s cache or run your session in a private/incognito window that forgets everything when closed Right click your browser’s icon and select ‘New private/incognito window’ from the menu – this works for Edge, Chrome and Firefox. On Safari use File > New Private Window.

Most of us in our homes will not bother to explicitly log out and your session will persist for a couple of days before you will be asked to login again. If you tick “Remember Me” that extends to a couple of weeks.

Popular plugins and warnings

These are the most popular 3rd party plugins in use across our 700+ sites at the start of December. They are not part of SiteWorks and need to be manually installed and managed (more on this below).

These plugins are not formally supported, but you are welcome to contact our Help Desk and we will do our best to assist, but be aware we don’t have first-hand experience of all of them. You can also ask on the u3a WordPress forum <https://u3awpdev.org.uk>

Remember to try out plugins on Local WP or a test server first. While those on this list should give your site no problems, many of them require specific steps to be taken when installing/configuring. Also, they may require your website terms of use to be updated and perhaps your privacy notice and policy for members.

Highlighted are those we know require action.

Count	Plugin	Function and take note
95	Media Library Organizer	Gives a folder view of media entries.
66	WPvivid Backup Plugin	Copy your whole site to Local WP or another server. We provide instruction notes on siteworks.u3a.org.uk > Web Manager > ‘How to articles’ Make sure files are not stored on the SiteWorks server.
39	u3a PDF download stats	Developed by a SiteWorks user. See the u3a WordPress forum https://u3awpdev.org.uk/viewtopic.php?t=740 (you need to register)
28	WPForms Lite	Create a form that generates an email Stores or processes personal data relating to site visitors. Must configure the email address to not be the SwDevAdmin’s

25	Enable Media Replace	Puts up a new version of an image, PDF etc. without the need to edit page(s) that reference it.
21 and 33	Duplicate Page and WP Duplicate Page	Useful when you need a new page that is similar to an existing one.
20	Contact Form 7	Also creates forms but is considered to be more complex to use than WPForms Stores or processes personal data relating to site visitors Must configure the email address to not be the SwDevAdmin's
20	FileBird Lite	Alternative to Media Library Organizer
16	WP Migrate Lite WP Migrate Lite Compatibility	Alternative to WPvivid (does not store files on the server)
16	WordPress Importer	Similar to WPvivid but with limited function Make sure files are not stored on the SiteWorks server.
13 12	WP Activity Log Simple History	Essentially an audit trail of changes. Requires website terms of use to be updated.
11	WP Last Modified Info	Lots of functionality on page update dates. If email notifications are enabled change any pages/posts where the Author is SWDevAdmin (see WordPress 6.9 below)

Plugin best practice and be aware

Our Sysadmin team manage and secures the SiteWorks estate. Part of this involves monitoring that may result in a friendly email relating to a plugin being sent to all the registered administrators of your site.

If you are using one of the plugins listed above some of the things to watch out have been highlighted.

The main points to be aware of include:

- A plugin is installed that may issue cookies or collect personal data so we issue advice that you check your website and privacy policies.

- A plugin is installed that we know from experience requires changes from the default configuration to work effectively, e.g. WPForms which sets the WordPress site admin as the default recipient for reports and form submissions. *If not changed our SysAdmin team will be sent the emails.*
- Every couple of months we look at outstanding plugin updates for third-party plugins and send reminders where plugins installed on sites are at least two versions or three months behind the current plugin version.
- We notice a cycle of install/activate/deactivate/delete in a short period suggesting the WM is trying something out on their production site.
- A plugin is installed that might breach SiteWorks T&Cs, such as some backup plugins or plugins that bypass measures we have to prevent certain types of files from being uploaded.
- A plugin is installed which we consider unsuitable, such as those that handle email delivery (unless the WM is also arranging to use a provider such as SendGrid, Mailgun or Amazon SES), or those that are written for the "Classic" WordPress editor, or for third-party page design tools we don't use such as Elementor or Divi.
- A plugin is installed which has the ability to use "code snippets" such as WPCode, WP Coder or WPCodeBox, which has the risk of third-party PHP or JavaScript code being installed that could carry a security risk.

Tidy up your site administrators

We have noticed sites that have administrator logins for SiteWorks volunteers, some of whom have long since left the team.

Can we ask Web Managers to review all their User accounts, especially the administrators, and remove those no longer needed? Note that if you contact the Help Desk you don't need a User account setup for our team to should you agree for them to take a closer look at your site.

Important – when you delete a user you will be asked for a user to take ownership of the pages they authored.

If you don't assign ownership then WordPress will delete all the pages, posts and media that have the user as Author.

WordPress 6.9

WordPress 6.9 has now been picked up by all SiteWorks sites – something beyond our control. The team looked at preview versions and concluded there was no need to warn Web Managers in advance. It was a case of failing to spot the difference.

That said, we have recently observed:

There is a new "Notes" feature that lets you add a note/comment to a block. This will email the page/post's Author. For Site Builder migrated pages this will be SwDevAdmin and email our SysAdmin team.

If you use this feature then change the page/post Author to one of your Administrators or Users. You can see the Authors on the Pages/Posts listing and change them using the **Quick edit** menu.

There are many articles and videos going over the details of the changes. One of the best we've come across for users is this YouTube video from Paul Charlton's WPTuts channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPPkrk5tJ90>

Some notes on what's new in a subjective order of usefulness:

- There is a new 'Accordion' block. This allows content to be hidden and expanded under the control of the reader, usually by clicking a +. See <https://helpdesk.u3asite.uk/accordion-example/> for a very simple example of the concept.

It is similar to the 'Details' block with the advantage that it integrates multiple entries into one block.

- Images in a Gallery block can now have an aspect ratio set. From the 'hamburger' menu select the whole gallery and use the ASPECT RATIO dropdown in the Settings menu on the right.



- You can drag and drop (most) blocks and media from the Block icons list and Media list on the left to your page when opened with



- A new 'Time to Read' block inserts a heading showing the time estimated to read a block (obviously one containing text). Alternatively it can show a word count.
- Blocks can be hidden so they are not displayed in the editor or the live page – a new option on a block's three dots menu. This may be useful if you want to try out various alternative layouts as you don't need to remove the blocks or start a new page. It's also useful if you are called away when making edits – just hide your work and Save it for later. Some of us may prefer to just work on a copy of the whole page using the Duplicate plugin. When ready the copy replaces the original.

- The “View tab” that appears at bottom after “Save” now opens new tab. To preview the page in the same (previously used) tab use the preview button top-right



Welcome to the Team

A big welcome to two new volunteers on the SiteWorks Team. Bev Southgate will help us introduce learning sessions on Zoom. The Beacon team run these and they are very popular.

Simon Thompson will initially be creating instructional videos to complement the User Guide and Learning guides.

Call for testing volunteers

We would welcome a couple more testers onto the team. While SiteWorks is generally stable there are occasional updates and bug fixes to check out. If you think you can help email info@siteworks.u3a.org.uk to find out more.

Support over Christmas and New Year

Some of the volunteers will be around over the festive period and the Help Desk and email info@siteworks.u3a.org.uk will remain open, but expect a few days delay in a response around the 25th/26th and 31st/1st.

Our System administration team will continue to monitor all sites and notify web managers of any issues needing their attention. We understand our hosting services will continue to provide 24/7 support.

If you’ve managed to read this far then you doubly deserve seasonal greetings from all of us on the SiteWorks volunteer team.

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The SiteWorks Team



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