



In this edition:

- Purpose of newsletter
- Message from National Support Lead
- Introduction to Head of Member Services (Interim)
- Further Information
 - ⇒ Beacon Software Specifications
 - ⇒ Beacon Training
 - ⇒ Beacon Finance
 - ⇒ Beacon Cookies and Anti-Track Software
 - ⇒ Beacon User Statistics
- Communications Team

The purpose of this bi-monthly newsletter is to provide useful information to our Beacon Users.

Message from Beacon National Support Lead

I begin my report this month by informing you of the sad death of one of our key team members, Gary Nye. Gary died suddenly whilst on holiday in Mexico and our thoughts are with his family. Gary managed the testing team for Beacon and was a major contributor to the Beacon Forum, providing answers to many of the difficult questions. He will be greatly missed.

In the last two months we have implemented an update to our Laravel software. Laravel provides the PHP error handling within Beacon and the update exposed some historical program bugs which have now been addressed. We have also deployed the ability to give refunds without affecting the Receipt and Payments balance.

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Message from Beacon National Support Lead (continued)

In essence it allows you to make a negative payment. We have also implemented one to two step Members Portal login. I would advise you to look up the User Guide because this will affect everyone.

Our next issue of Beacon News is not due out until after Christmas. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to wish you a Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Frank Bailey

Introduction to Head of Member Services (Interim)

I've worked in the charity sector for almost 30 years and have been managing advice services for almost 20 years, during that time I've project managed the implementation of a number CRM systems and databases ranging from very small bespoke projects to large international projects.

I've been with the Trust for just over a year as Advice & Information Manager and am delighted to be working with the Beacon team and learning more about Beacon and the planned integration with SiteWorks.

Kate Cowan



FURTHER INFORMATION

Beacon Software Specifications

Most of you will be aware that the Beacon code has been maintained and enhanced by a specialist company Siftware since 2017. While they have expertise in the code and can work out and fix what Beacon does, they are not u3as so simply don't have our perspective.

It's a bit like inviting decorators to give your house a makeover, you will need to specify and discuss the materials and colours you want and fit everything into a realistic budget. Overlook this aspect and it will be hit and (more likely) miss as to whether you end up with something to your liking. If it isn't for you then obviously putting it right creates delay, inconvenience and ups the cost.

To mitigate this in the Beacon world we write a specification for every change. For a simple amendment such as the wording in a message the spec will be pretty brief – a sentence or two. Some of the recent finance enhancements have required multi-paged documents that describe with screen mock-ups the u3a experience. We also have to spell out what happens in all scenarios, the jargon for this being 'use cases'.

What checks against actions does Beacon need to make, what errors can be generated and how are they handled, what privileges apply, what is audit logged? A specification will also provide guidance on testing and how the User Guide and other documentation is impacted

Siftware have acknowledged that specifications have made them more productive. Questions on what we want are much reduced and re-working after testing or even deployment is generally only minor.

Graham Tigg

Software Specifications lead

Beacon Training

We have been reviewing our training sessions and given the number of attendees will be running the following sessions in November and January, February and March 2025.

We will review the interest and then decide what demand there is for each course.

Site Administration	one each month (Nov [24] Jan, Feb, March 2025)
Membership Secretaries	one each month (Nov [24] Jan, Feb, March 2025)
Business Secretaries	one every second month (Nov [2024], Feb 2025)
How to get more from Beacon (aimed at Chairs and Vice Chairs)	one every second month (Jan, March 2025)
Treasurers Part 1 and Part 2	every month (Nov [24] Jan, Feb, March 2025)
Group Coordinators	every month (Nov [24] Jan, Feb, March 2025)
On Line Joining and Renewals	one every second month (Jan, March 2025)

Please note that we only take bookings for courses when the exact date is sent out so please do not try to book until you have the date and time.

Beacon Finance

There has been some confusion about the Ledgers in Beacon. They are typically Current and Membership. These can have transactions entered associated to a Group. Here is a view of the main ledger transactions in Ledger by Group.

Continued on next page

Beacon Finance (continued)

This is just a different view of the transactions in the Current Account but only showing those associated with a Group.

Ledger - by group

Group - all - Year 2024 1 Sep 2024 - 31 Aug 2025

Select	Transaction	Date ▲	Batch No	Batch Ref	Payee/Payer	Group	Detail	Account	In	Out	Balance	Cleared
	186	1 Sep 2024			Art Appreciation JSA	Art Appreciation JSA	Group Opening Balance	Current	£16.00		£16.00	1 Sep 2024
	187	1 Sep 2024			Bridge	Bridge	Group Opening Balance	Current		£165.25	-£149.25	1 Sep 2024
	192	1 Sep 2024			Travel Grp trip to Garden	Travel Grp trip to Garden	Group Opening Balance	Social Account	£420.00		£270.75	1 Sep 2024
	Total Brought Forward											
											£270.75	
<input type="checkbox"/>	195	23 Sep 2024			John Leader	Art Appreciation JSA	Click to access the group's record	Groups	£101.00		£371.75	
<input type="checkbox"/>	196	23 Sep 2024			Hiresel art gallery	Art Appreciation JSA	Pay for Group visit	Groups		£50.00	£371.75	Pending
<input type="checkbox"/>	205	25 Sep 2024			john a	Art Appreciation JSA		Current	£10.00		£371.75	Pending

Do with selected Confirm payment

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Groups Statement and individual Group Ledgers

The Groups Ledger has data usually entered by the individual Group Leader using the facility in their individual group. This is totally separate from the data in the Ledger as controlled by the Treasurer. This can be viewed, subject to the appropriate permissions (privileges) using **Group Statement** under **Finance** on the main site menu.

Groups Statement

From 1/9/2024 To 31/8/2025 Refresh

Show transactions

Group	B/F	In	Out	Balance	Status
Art Appreciation JSA	£55.00	£5.00	£2.00	£58.00	Current
Bridge					Current
Coffee and Cake					Current
Computing For Beginners					Current
demo					Current
demo on april					Current
Family History					Current
Folk Dancing					Current
Gardening	£25.00			£25.00	Current
Photography Digital					Current
Railways and Canals					Current
Spanish					Current
Travel Grp trip to Garden					Current
Wine Tasting					Current
Group	B/F	In	Out	Balance	Status

Download Excel

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Beacon Finance (continued)

Group Leaders can input, or edit, the source transactions for this Groups **Statement** using the **Ledger** tab for the groups they are a Leader of.

See below:

Group Record for Art Appreciation JSA

Details Schedule Members Ledger

Group Ledger

From 1/9/2024 to 31/8/2025

Date	Payee	Detail	In	Out	Balance	
		Brought forward			£55.00	
23 Sep 2024	fred	coffee	£5.00		£60.00	edit - delete
23 Sep 2024	Group Ltd	coffee cost		£2.00	£58.00	edit - delete
Date	Payee	Detail	In	Out	Balance	

[Download Excel](#)

Add transaction

Date	Payee	Detail	In	Out
12/10/2024				

[Save](#)

Please remember these figures are not linked in any way to those in the main ledger and this is intended as a cash book for the individual group leader.

Beacon Cookies and Anti-Track Software

There is the possibility that some Anti-track software will prevent Beacon's cookie banner from working correctly.

Beacon uses optional cookies only to save User preferences. Beacon cookies are only ever stored on the User's device and are never uploaded, analysed, shared or used for marketing or tracking. Note that Beacon's cookies will remember your preferences for 90 days after which the cookie banner will re-appear. The banner will also appear if you delete your browser's cookies. Cookies are not shared between browsers, so if you use more than one browser to access Beacon each browser will store your preferences independently.

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Beacon Cookies and Anti-Track Software (continued)

If you accept optional cookies in Beacon it will remember your u3a name on the login page, your printer settings, the last e-mail address you used to send e-mail etc. The cookies acceptance page gives details of items saved.

Although Beacon does not use any tracking cookies, some Anti-track software marks them as such, which then causes the cookie banner to appear at every change of page in Beacon.

If you experience this problem, please mark Beacon or its URL u3abeacon.org.uk as an exception in the Anti-track software.

John Alexander

Training and Documentation Lead

Beacon User Statistics

As of the 4th November 2024, the number of live sites and their members, are shown below.

u3as / Networks / Regions	Number
u3as using Beacon	616
Members in these u3as	288,155
Networks / Regions using Beacon	16
Members in these Networks / Regions	5,067
u3as preparing to migrate to Beacon	8
u3as using Demo24 (Demonstration site) to investigate joining Beacon	54

John Alexander

Training and Documentation Lead

John Hopkins

Journey and Migration Lead

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Who we are and what we do

Name	Role
Malcolm Tulip	Team Leader
A N Other	Newsletter & Website Administrator
Graham Tigg	Website Support

Beacon Communications Team



Malcolm Tulip
Team Leader



A N Other
Newsletter &
Website
Administrator



Graham Tigg
Website
Support

BEACON WEBSITE

Beacon is an on line management system designed by u3as, for u3as. It provides a simple interface for managing members, groups and finances. Beacon is available to all u3as in the UK that wish to take advantage of it. More information about Beacon can be found through the link to the website.

The members of the editorial team are as follows:

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