



About The CCu3a Website

- 1. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT:** This document describes the CCu3a website for anyone who might in future take on its maintenance and further development.

It also provides an outline to committee members as to why the site has been designed in the way it has, and some of its advantages and constraints.

*(Note: the ccu3 website makes use of u3a's **Sitebuilder** system for developing & maintaining u3a websites. As of January 2023, this system is under redevelopment, which by later in 2023 is expected to offer improved facilities and reduce some of the constraints present in the current version. The new version is **Siteworks**, being built using Wordpress. All Sitebuilder sites across the UK will then need to be migrated to Siteworks, coordinated from the centre. This programme is expected to take two years to complete them all. It is not yet known when CCu3a's site will be migrated; once it is, this document will then need to be replaced, or modified accordingly).*

- 2. PURPOSE OF THE CCU3A WEBSITE:** The site has two primary purposes –

- a. **To introduce ccu3a to prospective members**, giving a flavour of where we are, who we are, what we do, and how to contact us;
- b. **To provide a reference for existing members** as to forthcoming events, our groups and their leaders, news updates etc.

The aims are for the site to be *welcoming, informative, clear, comprehensive yet concise.*

What it's not:

It's not a *newsletter*. There is a "Noticeboard" column on the Welcome page for specific, significant items of news, but in general the site's content is relatively static. CCu3a and national u3a newsletters, with their more dynamic content, are available by clicking the relevant links from the website, however.

It's *impersonal*; the only members who are named are committee members and others who undertake specific roles, eg group leaders, webmaster etc.

It's not an *electronic forum for communication* between members, or between the committee and the members. Email and social media are more suited for these purposes, and CCu3a has a *Facebook* presence to which the website contains a link.

It is not set up for the *online sale of u3a merchandise or event/outing tickets*; it doesn't offer the necessary financial or security facilities for these purposes. See the national u3a website for this purpose.

It doesn't handle CCu3a *administration*, and contains no financial* or membership details, personal or otherwise. Larger u3as can use u3a's Beacon system for this purpose, although ccu3a membership may be too small for this to be justified here.

*(Financial reports from recent AGMs are however included, as links from the Reports page).

3. NATIONAL U3A's FACILITIES FOR DEVELOPING & MAINTAINING WEBSITES:

individual u3as are free to adopt any available facilities for developing, maintaining, hosting and supporting their websites; they are not forced to use those provided by national u3a. There are however significant benefits to be found in using u3a's offerings, however (as well as some frustrating constraints).

National u3a offers **Sitebuilder**, a system for developing and maintaining u3a websites; a **hosting service**, providing the internet-linked computer services upon which each Sitebuilder website runs; and a **support service**, to advise and assist u3as in using Sitebuilder to best effect, solving or helping to solve such problems as may arise.

3.1 Benefits of using Sitebuilder:

- it is purpose-designed for ease of use in development and maintenance, being aimed at developers without a professional background in website development.
- it offers the u3a developer fairly restricted facilities when compared with most commercially available systems, reducing the range of options to try to understand and cuts down the opportunities for getting things wrong.
- it is designed to produce websites which are easy to use by members without any computing background at all.
- some pages are pre-formatted so that no design is required, it is simply content (mostly textual) which needs to be entered.
- some content can be date-limited so that they are not displayed once the relevant has passed.
- Sitebuilder enables u3a websites to be built which can be viewed irrespective of the users' device type (eg PC, laptop, tablet, smartphone) or operating system (eg Windows, Android, Chrome, iOS etc).
- it offers consistency in structure and "look & feel" between u3a websites, enabling members to understand and navigate easily the websites of neighbouring u3as (who might offer other groups or events of interest, or opportunities for joint events or outings, for example).
- it is supported centrally by a team who understand u3as, their limited needs and their even more limited abilities.
- The u3a developer is concerned only with *using* Sitebuilder, not in *maintaining* or *hosting* it; contact with the *support* team is via email, and only as and when he/she needs it.
- it is *free*! Unlike with other web development & hosting services, there is no charge to u3as for Sitebuilder, hosting or support.

3.2 Constrains in using Sitebuilder:

- There is no *test system*; once content is entered and saved it is displayed on the “live” site. if changes are made, then once displayed look unsuitable, only the last change can be reversed – no problem if merely a spelling mistake has been made, but a much bigger one if significant changes to layout or content have been made. Before major changes are made, the developer must – if he can - use his own means of saving the pre-changed content; Sitebuilder offers the developer no rollback facility.
- **Images** (eg photos, cartoons, maps, diagrams, posters etc) are not well handled:
 - The only place where a full-screen image can be displayed is on the Home page; elsewhere, images can only be shown as thumbnails which must be clicked to see them full-screen.
 - Image thumbnails can only be shown to the left or the right of text, not embedded in it.
 - The number of images held in Sitebuilder is limited; each page should only show up to 25 images (but Sitebuilder is inconsistent in applying this limit) and the size of each image is restricted to 1.5 MB (Sitebuilder is however consistent in applying this limit). Since most modern cameras and even smartphones produce images significantly larger than this, most photos need to be cropped and/or edited down before they can be displayed.
 - Images cannot be used as wallpaper or backgrounds to text, they must be separate from it.
- **Videos** can be added but they are so restricted in size that they can only run for a few seconds, which makes it not really worthwhile trying to include them.
- **Files** (eg reports, newsletters, slidesets etc) are not well handled either. They are restricted in size to 5.5 Mb (Sitebuilder consistently applied this limit) and each site is constrained to a total of 150Mb of files (Sitebuilder does not consistently apply this limit).
- The **sequence** of some items (eg Noticeboard items on Welcome page, photos on Gallery page if used) is out of the developer’s control. They are presented in apparent random order, irrespective of when they were entered; they are not displayed in numerical or alphabetical order either.
- **Text & background**: There are a few but limited facilities for varying the colours of border, backgrounds or text, and for changing the size or style of text fonts. You can however make text bold or italic.

4. ACCESSING THE CCu3a WEBSITE:

If you are reading this you have probably already accessed our website, but for completeness the URL is: <https://u3asites.org.uk/cannock-chase>.

Webmaster Roles: Sitebuilder recognises two Webmaster roles - Administrator and Editor.

What we in CCu3a calls the Webmaster is really what Sitebuilder calls the **Administrator**. There is only one administrator for a Sitebuilder site. The Administrator can use every option on the normal menu, and the additional Administrator's menu.

Sitebuilder provides for two levels of **Editor** roles – the site editor and the page editor. The Site **Editor** has restricted editing capabilities. He/she can edit any part of the site, but will not see the Administrator menu option on the sidebar menu, and so cannot use the administration functions.

The **Page editor can** edit only one page of the site, and, if it is a group page, its sub-page(s). For example, a group leader might be allocated a login name to manage all the information about his or her own group. Page editors can edit page text, create and remove sub-pages, and carry out all the normal actions with page-related items: pictures, links, events and email contact addresses.

(CCu3a, being a relatively small u3a, currently has only an administrator; we do not believe that any editors are required. However another committee or webmaster may have different views, and may decide that one or more editors are required in future).

5. STRUCTURE:

When you first access the CCu3a website you are presented with the Home page, with tabs to the other pages on the site. Including the Home page itself, these are:

- **Home***
- **Welcome***
- **Groups***
- **Events***
- **Photos**
- **Reports**
- **Local Links**
- **Contact***
- **U3A***

Some of these pages (marked * above) are standard, required by Sitebuilder; others are optional and can be created by the developer. The formats of the standard pages are pre-defined by Sitebuilder, others are more free-format. Some of these pages - eg the Groups page – also have sub-pages, eg for individual groups.

HOME PAGE: Most other websites have a Home page, which introduces the site and explains how to access its contents. A Sitebuilder Home page doesn't automatically do these things, they are set up only to display a single, full-size image – usually a .jpg photo of some key feature of the u3a's location.

The CCu3a website gets around this constraint by using a Powerpoint slide, on which helpful text has been added alongside a photo of Cannock Chase, to look more like a conventional home page. This slide is then saved as a .jpg image so that it will be displayed in full on the Home page.

Scrolling Banner (Home Page): Another facility is to add a scrolling Banner or Ticker message across the top of the Home page. This can be used to highlight a significant forthcoming even or season's greetings, and will time out automatically after 3 weeks. It is not obvious how to enter this. You will need to access the "Administrator Menu" then "Customisation" option, where the facility for entering this message is shown at the bottom of the page.

WELCOME PAGE: The Welcome page contains more comprehensive introductory material than the Home page. There is a right-hand column which can contain a **Notice Board** which carries News Update items, and any Links required to other sources eg the **ccu3a Facebook** page.

Because of space limitations, the Noticeboard should be limited to significant news items which are short in length and few in number. They can contain links eg to other pages but not images such as posters. Deadlines can be set so that out-of-date items are automatically be removed.

GROUPS PAGE: The Groups page outlines the various special interest groups within CCu3a, together with a table listing the groups and summarising the times, frequencies & locations of each group session. The name of each group in this table contains a link to the sub-page of the respective group.

Each group's sub-page contains a summary of the group, with usually a cartoon image and,/or photos of group activities. Some group sub-pages can also contain links to group session materials, such as presentations or hand-outs.

EVENTS PAGE: The Events page lists in date order the CCu3a's schedule of planned events, with dates and topics. These include monthly speaker meetings, group meetings & outings, educational events and social gatherings. Out-of-date events are automatically removed from the display, although Sitebuilder archives them.

PHOTOS PAGE: The Photos page is a non-standard page created specifically for CCu3a. Sitebuilder does provide a standard offering for photos, known as the *Gallery* page, but the format of this is outside the control of the developer; photos are displayed in random order, irrespective of date or subject, and Sitebuilder chooses where they are displayed. Instead, the CCu3a Photos page has been specifically designed and developed to be structured by subject with sub-headings. Photos are displayed in a sequence which is under the control of the developer.

REPORTS PAGE: The Reports page is another non-standard page which contains links to various reports including AGM minutes, financial statements, visit reports etc. Links to reports from neighbouring u3as can be shown here too.

LOCAL LINKS: The Local Links page contains links to the websites of neighbouring u3as.

CONTACT PAGE: The Contacts page is a standard page designed to enable prospective members to enquire and apply for membership. It contains an email link to CCu3a (address hidden), links to application forms, and contact details for the membership secretary.

U3A: This is a tab rather than an actual page; it's simply a link to the national u3a website, <https://www.u3a.org.uk>.

ACCESSING SITEBUILDER:

Sitebuilder can be accessed via the National u3a Website, at <https://www.u3a.org.uk>.

Click on **Support for u3as** then the **Sitebuilder** option (you might need to register with u3a.org.uk for this). Alternatively, Sitebuilder can be accessed directly at <https://u3asites.org.uk>. Either way you will be presented with the **U3A Site Builder Home Page**.

Click on **Find Out More**, and you will be presented with some introductory information and options including:

- **About the U3A Site Builder**
- **Frequently Asked Questions**
- **Complete Index**
- **Permanent URLs.**

You can click on any of these to find out more. It is particularly recommended to read the **"About the U3A Sitebuilder"** and **"FAQ"** sections.

Returning to the **Sitebuilder Home Page**, click on **Login & Edit**, and you will be presented with the login screen asking for **Login Name and Password** (get these from the current or outgoing ccu3a webmaster; if he/she is unavailable, email Sitebuilder Support for assistance, at sitebuilderu3a@googlemail.com).

Once successfully logged in, you will be presented with the Main Menu Help Screen, **U3A Site Builder: Editing Cannock Chase**.

This contains an overview of how to use Sitebuilder, with a column down the left listing more detailed sections describing how to use each page and each facility. These include:

- **Main Menu**
- **Welcome**
- **Groups**
- **Events**
- **Contact**
- **Links**
- **Pages**
- **Pictures**
- **Files**
- **Admin Menu**
- **View Full Site**
- **Log Out**

Each of these options can be further exploded for more details. Whichever of these options you click on to view, the left-hand column continues to list the options available to you from wherever you are on Sitebuilder.

It is the purpose of this document to supplement and not replace or reproduce this content, which for the most part is self-explanatory, although in places it might need some thought, and numerous trial and error attempts in order to fully understand it. If after this you are still mystified, talk to the outgoing ccu3a webmaster if available, or email Sitebuilder Support at sitebuilderu3a@googlemail.com for assistance.

6. USING SPECIFIC FACILITIES.

While this document does not reproduce the Sitebuilder User Instructions, there are some facilities which the CCu3a site uses for which it may be helpful to describe specifically:

- **Editing Text:** the content of the CCu3a site is mainly textual, and it entered from the “Editing Text” option from the menu for each particular page.
- **Changing Colours:** The Admin Menu allows you to make some changes to the site’s colour scheme. These are somewhat limited, but the facility is available from the Customisation option.
- **Adding Files:** What Sitebuilder calls “Files” are typically reports, eg visit reports, AGM minutes, slidesets etc. These may be downloaded from the developers’ device. The main format is the industry-standard **PDF** format; a few others can be handled but it’s best to keep to this standard. This will enable users with different devices (PCs, laptops, tablets or phones running Windows, Chrome, Android, iOS etc) to access the report without needing to obtain and re-load the software first. Make sure that you click on the buttons for “Inline Only”, otherwise a reference to your file may appear separately in a column on the right-hand side of the page.
- **Adding Pictures:** What Sitebuilder calls “Pictures” includes photos, drawings (including cartoons & other clipart), maps etc. These may be downloaded to Sitebuilder from the developer’s device, often copied from the internet. The main format is the industry-standard .jpg (**JPEG**) format; a few others can be handled but it’s best to keep to this standard. Make sure that you click on the buttons for “Inline Only” and “Omit from Gallery”.
- **Adding Pages:** In addition to the standard pages, it is possible to create your own page, which will have its own tab at the top. You might want to do this for a specific subject not already covered by standard pages (eg “Robots”), or where there are weaknesses in Sitebuilder’s standard page offering (eg replacing Sitebuilder’s “Gallery” page with “Photos” page). These can be created from the Pages Menu.
- **Sub-pages** are pages which do not have their own tab at the top, but are accessed by links from other pages. Examples of these are Group sub-pages, which Sitebuilder caters for, and CCu3a’s “Robots” page, which had to be created separately. Group sub-pages are accessed from the Groups page, whereas the Robots sub-page is accessible from a number of main pages including Reports & Groups, as well as the Science & Technology group sub-page.
- **Adding Links:** These are web links to other sites (eg other u3as or national u3a) or objects contained within other sites (eg national u3a newsletters). These are entered from the “Links” option of the Sitebuilder menu. Again, make sure that you click on the buttons for “Inline Only” unless you want your link to be referenced in the right-and column too.
- **Saving:** Always remember to click the Save button for each page updated, or else your update will be lost.

Important Message: KEEP IT SIMPLE!

7. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

By early 2025, Sitebuilder will have been replaced by a new facility, **Siteworks**. Siteworks will build on the strengths of Sitebuilder and address some of its limitations, and is expected to add some new facilities too.

Existing sites like CCu3a will be migrated to Siteworks in due course, as part of a programme managed by u3a HQ. As a result of this migration, it is expected that individual u3as will be presented with their existing site running in the new environment with minimal local involvement. Local u3as will then be able to continue to maintain their websites and to take advantage of the benefits of Siteworks at their own initiative and in their own time.

Contact chris.winner@u3a.org.uk for more information about Siteworks, and see the dedicated Siteworks website <https://Siteworks.u3a.org.uk> for progress updates).

8. SUPPORT:

Sitebuilder is supported by volunteer u3a members. They can help us build and maintain our website and they manage the hosting service which is where our physical websites are held. They do an excellent job but we cannot always expect instant response from our queries, so be patient.

Sitebuilder support is contactable vis email at sitebuilderu3a@googlemail.com

(Note that Sitebuilder Support are currently concerned with supporting existing Sitebuilder sites only, not their migration to Siteworks, but that they will become the support function for Siteworks in due course).