

Systems and Admin Report - 2020

Introduction

This report should be read in conjunction with the systems analysis written by Tony Kiddle.

There are a number of issues with the current systems that need to be addressed and these are detailed below.

At the same time as Beverley Daley-Yates is standing down from involvement with editing the OGA websites her company is also ceasing to be involved in paid work for the Association and so we have sourced a replacement Drupal consultant. His name is David Thorne and he has been involved in the development of Drupal itself.

Drupal

Drupal is the environment on which the current website and the Boat Register are developed. The version of Drupal (v7) that the site currently runs on is now approaching end of life and will become unsupported and insecure. The upgrade from version 7 to 8 and then 9 is far-reaching and involves creating a new blank installation and then importing all the data from the old database to the new one. It then requires a new design template to be created as the existing one will not work on the new platform.

We have consulted David Thorne and he advises that Drupal has moved to become an Enterprise System and so is overkill for the relatively simple 'magazine' website that we have. Drupal could still be used for the Boat Register. We are therefore investigating using a simpler system for the website such as provided by Tony's company to his school clients or WordPress.

The Boat Register could be redeveloped, transferring the existing data to a new system. The commercial cost of this would probably not be much different than the Drupal upgrade. Julian Cable has looked at the idea of creating a new system and hopes to have something to show the Association Committee in January to demonstrate this.

David Thorne has provided a quotation for upgrading the Boat Register part of the Drupal installation of 6 weeks or £12,600. Four weeks of this would be the design template. He has also given a quotation for extracting the data and creating the underlying structure of a new system for £6300. A user interface would need to be added on top. These quotations are just to give an idea of the commercial cost of alternatives.

Email Problems

Currently email facilities are run on the Linux server that hosts the OGA website. We have recently had some problems with emails being bounced by Yahoo/BTInternet and Virgin. Despite raising support tickets and getting ourselves removed from blacklists we have continued to have problems. Apparently we are not alone in this as checking on incoming emails to Yahoo/BTInternet has become stricter.

The best way to resolve this sort of issue will be to outsource our email facility and any problems to an external provider such as Google. The disadvantage of this is the cost which would be a minimum of £883 with Google.

Copyright Issues

The OGA has had to pay a penalty licence of £150 for using a photo without permission of the copyright holder. The photo was of David Dimbleby's boat and permission was sought from his PA but not from the copyright holder. This illustrates the importance of control over what is published in the OGA's name and raises an issue about images of boats that are uploaded by members to the Boat Register. We ask for copyright details to be entered but this does not mean that permission has been given.

Sailing By website

This website was developed for the OGA by Xited Ltd, paid for by some of the sponsorship that the OGA raised for the 50th Anniversary. The intention was to link the progress of the Round Britain in 2013 with historical stories and has continued in the same vein since.

Xited Ltd have been paid for hosting but with their involvement ending the Association should now have control of the website and the hosting. Details have been requested to allow the domain name and content to be moved but this is not yet complete.

The website declares that content is published under Creative Commons licence which is a form of Copyright. Anything published under Creative Commons has to have a link to the actual licence for the text/photo/video and Alistair has not found any such links.

In addition the site contains embedded videos from YouTube whose terms of service forbid use for commercial purposes. Since the purpose of Sailing By is to encourage membership of the OGA this qualifies as commercial use. The Association is thus vulnerable to multiple copyright claims.

In light of this Alistair would recommend that the website is taken down as soon as possible. At the last GMC meeting it was agreed that the best course for the site would be to move the OGA relevant content to the main website and then point the Sailing-By domain at the main site, as per the circulated minutes.

Membership System

The new membership system is in place and currently Tony and Mary are running the new and the old systems in parallel. As soon as both of them are happy, a backup of the old system database will be taken for archive and the Windows server will be decommissioned. At this point Area users will be given access to the new system.

IT Handover

The IT tasks that Alistair has been covering are listed below.

1 Server Maintenance

We currently have two servers, one Windows and one Linux. The servers are supplied by EUKHost with whom we have a 24/7 support contract. Alistair is being replaced by Tony as the named contact.

If we can move to systems that do not require a virtual server and can be hosted purely as websites on a shared server then this task will no longer be needed.

2 Email Maintenance

The Linux server has a Plesk Control Panel where the email addresses can be maintained. Tony, Colin and Julian all have access to the control panel. If we move to an external email provider then this task will no longer be needed in the same way. There will simply be an Admin for the emails.

3 Data Export

One of the consequences of changes in the format needed for addresses for the Gaffers Log is that Alistair has been creating the address list directly from the database. The new Membership system removes the need for this.

4 Software Coding

Alistair has written code for background database transfers. Julian is easily capable of doing this if it is needed in the new systems.

Alistair Randall

3 January 2020