



REPORT ON PROGRESS ON THE SHA WEBSITE

BACKGROUND

There has been widespread and longstanding concern about the useability of the SHA website. People complain that it offers a very poor impression of the organisation and is difficult to use. The shopfront is poor, and the delights within are difficult to find. Some see it as a significant barrier to progress and to attracting particularly young members.

An initial meeting was held in July 20 with Jean, Tony Beddow, Irene, Vivien, Mark, Ken, Brian and Max, Brian's son-in-law who is knowledgeable about WordPress. WordPress is the software on which the SHA website is based. Max is offering his support pro-bono.

The meeting identified key improvements, based on other websites we like, our understanding of the users we currently have, and the users that we want to attract.

KEY IMPROVEMENTS WE WANT TO SEE

1. Easy to access (good search, easy navigation)
2. Content more palatable (rich template, images, cartoons, video etc.)
3. Home page - bold, clear Call To Actions, shows content (click bait)
4. Content is key - needs thought on historic vs new (and what to archive)
5. JOIN NOW - more members - clear how to join and what that means
6. Affiliates, members, branches - all need to be showcased and highlighted throughout site.
7. Private Members / workspace - this could be a third party system that we point to rather than host on site.

TECHNICAL MEETING

These suggestions were discussed at a technical level in November with our webmaster, Mike Little, Ken and Max. They worked out what was feasible technically and asked Mr Little for possible costings.

THE NEXT MEETING TO EXPLORE BUILD AND COST OPTIONS

The group met again in November 20. Mark Ladbroke, Tony Beddow and Vivien Walsh did not want to attend. Geof Rayner had, in the meantime, not only expressed interest in helping improve the website, but also, and most generously, offered to personally fund work on the site. The meeting thus consisted of Jean, Geof, Ken, Brian and Max.

The solution from Mr Little was described as follows:

We propose to rebuild the site design and its navigation from scratch without losing any of the original content.

- The new site will have a good looking home page with key areas highlighted and prominent.

- There will be clear calls to action for each function of the site: Join Now, etc.
- New content will be surfaced on the home page automatically.
- There will be a number of page templates to suit the different types of content.

The site will be rebuilt using WordPress' multisite capability. This will allow different areas of the site – sub-sites – to be separated both from architectural and administrative points of view.

Much of the older content of the site can be moved to an 'Archive' sub-site aimed at researchers and the like. It will be fully searchable from the home page and from search engines such as Google.

The sub sites will allow for a more granular control of users' capabilities. Different areas of the site can be made editable by smaller groups of specific people. Affiliates' areas, members areas, and branches can each have their own sub-sites.

We propose that the site switches over to the new WordPress block editor for future content. The existing old content will continue to work. New content will be able to take advantage of the beautiful new creativity provided by the block editor and a modern up-to-date template.

There will be a future capability of having a private members' workspace including forums, private discussion groups etc. **This is not included in this estimate.**

Website Design

The design will be based on an off-the shelf template modified for the SHA's branding.

A suitable template will be researched and, once approved, modified to incorporate SHA's logo, colours, and branding.

Content Architecture

The reworking of the content architecture will need to be driven by someone familiar with both the goals of the site and the older content.

Site search

As the site's content will be silo-ed into different sub-sites, the standard WordPress search will not surface results from across all those sites. Instead we propose a customised search which will be able to specify the specific sites to use for searches and which sites and thus content to exclude.

The results will be presented transparently so the visitor will be unaware.

If required some sites can have their own silo-ed search, for example, the archive site.

The cost estimate

Rebuild

Design and development of a custom template.

Migration of old content to appropriate sub-sites.

Retention of existing SEO optimisation.

Build of key landing pages – e.g Home page, Archive, Join Now.

Custom cross site search.

Cost £2,500.00 +VAT

This is an estimate subject to the fine detail of the re-build and any additional requirements being identified.

Max advises that, in the subsequent year of a rebuild, we should budget for extra changes that we are likely to want, as things may not always go according to plan.

The likely overall cost may therefore be about £4000
A donor is personally willing to contribute £1000, for which we are enormously grateful.
The net cost would therefore be approximately £3000

Cost of Website maintenance

The current site hosting is billed at approximately £30 + VAT per month. This cost has not increased for more than five years.

As the new multisite build and cross site search will require more resources, I propose considering a change to hosting.

If you wish to remain on shared hosting, we propose a move to one of our more powerful servers with a monthly cost of £45+VAT per month.

In summary, this means an increase from £422 a year to about £600 a year

WORK REQUIRED TO REFINE THIS PROCESS

It will require consistent SHA work to bring this to fruition. More detailed discussions on design, function and cost will be needed, probably over many months.

Support from our members

Max has agreed to help us through this process, though he has little time. In addition, following a call to all members, we have had offers of help in project managing the whole process to an offer to help do basic background work.

CENTRAL COUNCIL IS ASKED TO AGREE TO THE FUNDING.

Dec 2020