Frequently Asked Questions

1. Migration to new Webspace Platform

Q: When will my community site move to the new webspace platform?

A: The project team are finalising the migration schedule and we hope to share this shortly. Sites will be grouped together in small "batches" and moved every week from start of March to mid-April 2021.

We are adopting an agile project methodology so these timings will remain fluid, however, we will let you know the exact timings for your site(s) at least 4 weeks prior to the move.

Q: How long will the migration process last

A: It is difficult to be specific as each Community site size varies in terms of size and complexity. We expect the end-to-end migration process to be a maximum of 12 weeks which includes a 4 week "notice and preparation" period for each site. Some sites may then take less than a week to move; others may take up to 8 weeks. We will explain more about the timescale and activities during the December / January Webspace Kick off teams calls.

Q: Does this mean I will be without a Community site for 12 weeks?

A: No, throughout the migration process you will continue to have access to your existing Community site, and this will not be switched off until the new site is operational on the new Webspace platform. The only exception to this will be those owners who have chosen not to upgrade or whose Community site has been adversely impacted by to the temporary platform in November.

Q: Can I make changes to my current community site

A: Yes, you can continue to update and modify content on your site now and throughout migration. However, there is a change freeze on the introduction of any new functionality including plug-ins until the new platform is implemented.

Q: I've attended a Webspace kick-Off session but I'm still not clear about what exactly will happen to my specific site? Will it move to WordPress or will it require a different more tailored solution?

A: Modern Tribe have reviewed each community site to understand what each site does and assess any current functionality. Most sites will move to a WordPress multisite platform and be assigned one of five pre-designed templates based on the site's purpose and usage.

Modern Tribe have identified around 30 sites that will not be able to move to the Webspace WordPress platform and will need something a little different. In these specific cases, CIS will contact the owners directly to discuss options in more detail.

Q: How much time will I have to move my community site to the new Webspace platform?

A: Modern Tribe will do the majority of "heavy lifting" to move your site to the new Webspace platform, although you will be involved in reviewing / signing off the content and testing the site works effectively before it goes live. Where Modern Tribe have identified that a more tailored solution is required, then those specific owners will be involved in more detailed discussions with CIS about the set-up of their site.

Q: I would like to set up my own site on the new platform rather than have Modern Tribe do it. Is this possible?

A: Yes – this is possible if you would like to do this. We will contact you 4 weeks before your site is due to move to the new platform and if you are confident in moving your site, then we will provide you with the necessary access and guidance for you to do this. However, this is entirely at your discretion – we recognise how exceptionally busy people are in the current environment and Modern Tribe have been contracted to move existing sites to the new Webspace platform so please do not feel you have to do this.

Q: I think it will be easier for me to "start afresh" on the new platform rather than move my existing site - how do I do this?

A: Our partners Modern Tribe (not CIS) will oversee the migration of our community sites to the new webspace platform. Four weeks before migration starts, we will contact you and if you would like to "start afresh" then we will provide you with the necessary access and guidance for you to do this. As before, this is entirely your decision.

Q: Will my existing HTML site simply be migrated to a new file space?

A: No, most of our Community sites will be moved by Modern Tribe to a hosted Webspace WordPress multisite platform – most HTML sites will be converted into a WordPress site and moved to the new platform. There will be a small number of sites that Modern Tribe decide will not be able to move and that will require a more tailored solution. Such sites will involve more detailed discussions with specific owners.

Q: My current community site is not working properly – what should I do?

A: CIS are aware that a small number of community sites may have been adversely affected by the "interim fix" put in place last November to mitigate the security risk posed by the out of support platform. It is important that you contact the IT Helpdesk to report any issues with your existing site – this will enable CIS to understand any remedial action that may be required and enable the project team to consider this when prioritising the migration schedule.

2. The New Webspace Platform

Q: When will we see the new Webspace platform?

A: This is currently being developed in partnership with Modern Tribe. We held Webspace Kick Off teams calls in December and January to share more information about the future platform and specific activities that you will be involved in. If you were unable to attend a Kick-Off call then please take a look at the recorded / slides for more information.

Q: When can I choose which WordPress template I will use for my site?

A: You will be assigned one of five pre-designed templates based on the purpose and usage of your site. The five templates (and how they will be applied) are highlighted in the recorded Webspace Kick Off Sessions. We will confirm which template you have been assigned as part of migration preparation process and Modern Tribe will populate this assigned template with the content from your existing community site ready for you to review.

Q: What WordPress template will be assigned to the personal sites of academics?

A: The Masterbrand template

Q: I have a new research project and want to set up a new site – how do I do this?

A: The process for requesting a new site will be clearly documented in the new governance approach. For now, the focus is on moving existing community sites to the new webspace platform. In the interim, if you have a new research project then please contact one of the Webspace project team or send an email request to cm.webdigital@durham.ac.uk

We will arrange to set up a basic WordPress site on the current sites.durham.ac.uk platform – the site will then be moved across to the new Webspace platform at a later date. It is important to stress that there will no additional functionality / support for these sites whilst migration is underway.

Q: Will PHP as a platform (without WordPress) still be available? Can I choose to stay on the upgraded PHP platform?

A: No, the PHP upgrade is a short-term, temporary fix only. It provides some additional time for the move to the new webspace platform whilst mitigating the increased security risk that occurred at the end of November.

Q: Will I still be able to keep the site updated by directly writing HTML as present or will it be a new content system with an imposed structure more like CMS?

A: This will be a new WordPress multisite platform with design templates and tools which are simpler to use, easier to manage and, more importantly, more secure. The majority of our community sites will be assigned to one of these design templates based on the purpose and usage of the site. They will be able to select "add-ons" from a pre-approved menu.

Modern Tribe may identify some sites requiring a different solution and we will discuss these options in more detail with the specific owners. As the community site owner, you will continue to be accountable for keeping your site updated.

Q: Will the URLs on the new Webspace platform be the same?

A: No, it's a new platform with new URLs.

Q: Will there be a redirect setup so that the old URLs will send users to the appropriate new ones? This is vital for sites where academic users are already

referencing URLs in the current site and even more so for sites where the URLs or some form of redirect must be preserved to ensure we don't break the chain of citation.

A: Yes, it will be possible to set up redirects from old urls to new ones. CIS will help facilitate this.

Q: Will the files still be hosted in my home space on Mira or elsewhere?

A: No, files will be hosted on an external hosting platform.

Q: Will new Webspace sites continue to track statistics from the old site or will the analysis need to start from scratch? We use Google Analytics, but some data does not go back to inception and is held natively in WordPress. Is there any way this data can be transferred across?

A: It is difficult to provide a single answer to this question as it depends on what tool you currently use to do analysis on your site and whether this tool can be used to add in historical data. For example, this should be possible with Google Analytics, but this is something that you will need to check.

It will not be possible for Modern Tribe to transfer this historical data, but you should be able to do this as site owner. We would recommend you copy / download this information and then determine the process for your specific analytics tool to combine the analytics data for two urls.

If you use an analytics tool that requires a WordPress plugin, then you may wish to submit a request for review of this plugin for wider use across the platform. The process for doing this will be detailed in the future governance framework.

Q: It sounds like I will not have the same degree of freedom or ability to customise on the new webspace platform?

A: To a certain extent this is correct, although site owners will continue to be accountable for the content published on their sites. The University Executive have made the strategic decision that the current "free for all" around community sites is no longer tenable. Some Universities are looking to stop similar community platforms, but Durham is keen to invest in this offering albeit it in a more secure and governed way.

Q: Can I leave the DU platform and set up my community site on an externally hosted site instead?

A: Durham has invested in a new webspace platform as it recognises the value of shared interest groups being able to share content and collaborate effectively. Some staff and students have set up sites on externally hosted sites (at their own cost) but it is important to stress that these are not funded or supported in any way by CIS / the University. The new webspace platform will provide users with an improved digital experience whilst improving security management and ensuring regulations around things like data protection are met. It will be hosted and managed by a third-party partner who has been approved by the University and ongoing service will be managed through a defined service agreement.

Q: I would prefer to be directly responsible for my own community site and presumably this is more likely if I host my site on an external platform?

Community site owners are responsible for content on their community site, ensuring this is accurate, relevant and meets relevant legal requirements and appropriate guidelines.

The University is accountable for ensuring data protection and IT security management is appropriately managed across all staff, students and other representatives of the University. This applies irrespective of whether sites are hosted on the DU platform or on an externally hosted platform. To date, governance around community sites has been very loose - moving forward this will be more comprehensive and the process for managing these sites much more transparent. Anyone setting up a community site on an external platform will need to complete an information security questionnaire (ISQ), and where appropriate, a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to confirm that the hosting platform meets a minimum standard of protection. This process will be clearly outlined in future governance documentation.

Q: I have a community site on an externally hosted site. Can I now use the new DU platform?

A: The focus of the Community Site Replacement Project is to move all existing community sites to the new webspace platform. In the future, staff and students who wish to add a new site to the platform will be able to make this request. The process for setting up new sites will be outlined in the governance documentation for the future webspace platform.