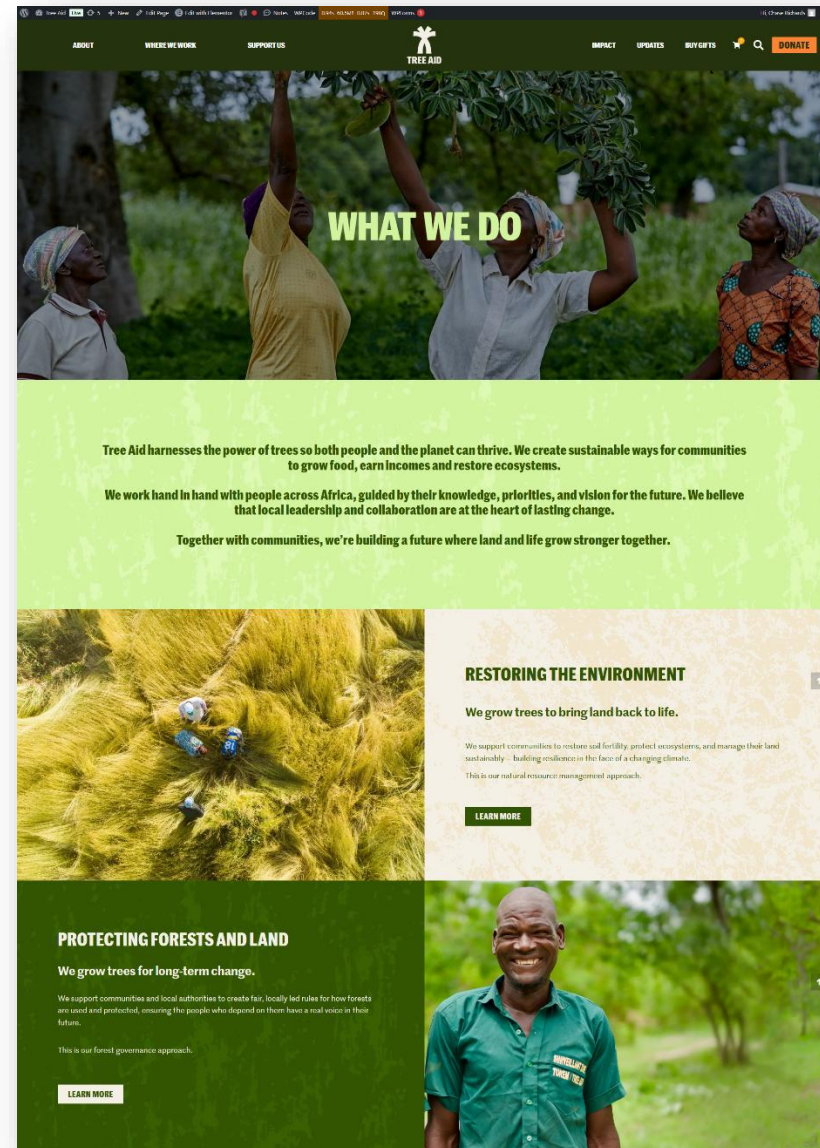
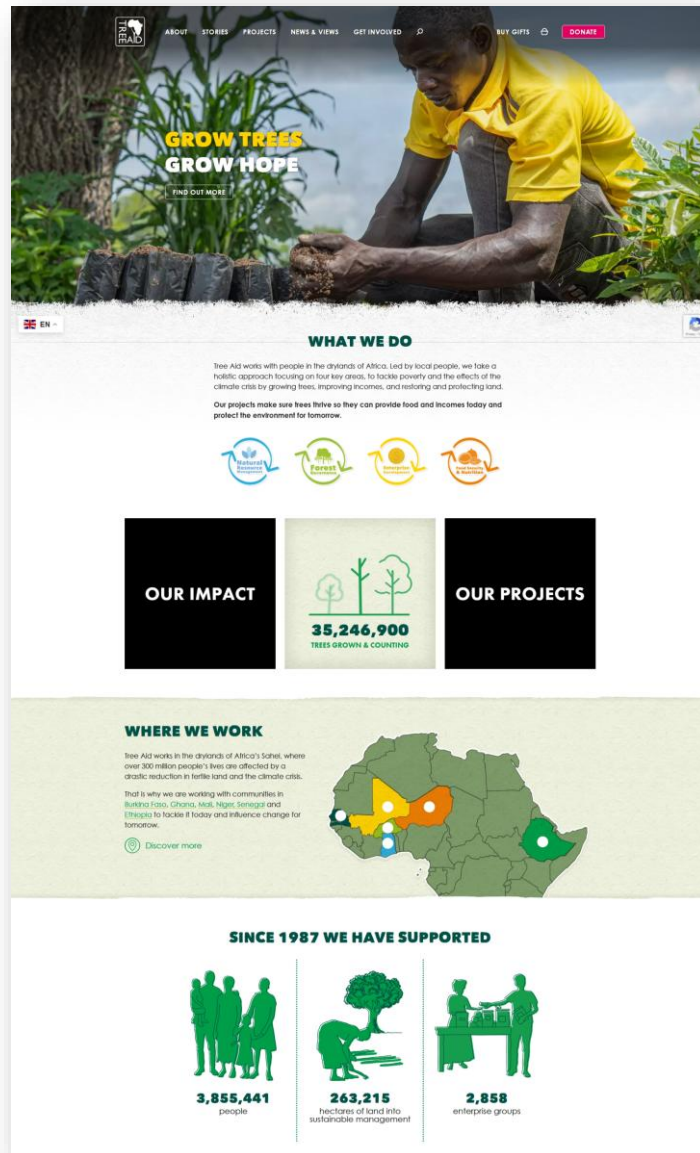


Tree Aid Website Redevelopment Case Study



Introduction

Tree Aid is an international charity that helps people in Africa's drylands plant trees and improve their livelihoods. By 2024 the organisation's public-facing website was running on **Umbraco 8**, a version which had reach End of Life, and no longer received security updates. Upgrading to Umbraco 13 or later would have required a full rebuild and offered no improvements for the fundraising team.

The legacy site was developer-driven; every new page or layout required development, but Tree Aid had no internal development resource. The donation workflow was handled by third-party embeds. With an unsupported and creaking CMS, Tree Aid's website faced increasing maintenance risk and compliance issues.

Tree Aid commissioned **FreshConstruct** to build a new WordPress site built with **Elementor** to give the marketing team full control over content, reduce friction in day-to-day fundraising and provide a bold new look aligned with their evolving brand. Additionally, a bespoke donation integration was required to connect Stripe payments seamlessly with **Raiser's Edge** CRM and reduce manual reconciliation work.

The Result

A **200% increase in donation rates** across web channels, and a modern CMS that empowers Tree Aid's small Marketing team to turn big ideas into live pages quickly, without needing to call in a developer.

Challenges and Objectives

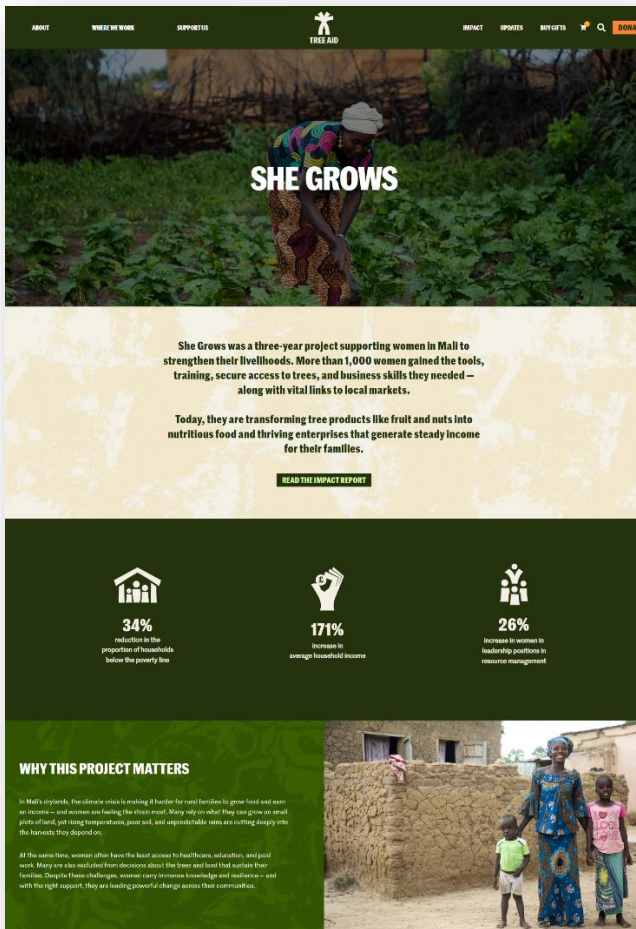
The project had to address several technical and organisational challenges:

- **Unseen brand guidelines** – a design agency crafted a bold new brand identity for Tree Aid, but this would only be available mid-way through the build. The FreshConstruct team needed to build content and components in a way that could be adapted to whatever brand style was eventually delivered.
- **Legacy platform and risk** – Umbraco 8 had entered the security-only phase; support ended on **24 February 2025**. This created a major security and compliance risk that had to be resolved as urgently as possible.
- **Cumbersome editing workflow** – on the old site, only the blog section was fully content-managed. Editors could not easily build landing pages and had to ask a developer to update navigation or change page layouts. Campaigns were slowed down by limited flexibility.
- **Fragmented donation process** – donations and gift purchases were processed through multiple forms. Stripe and Raiser’s Edge were not tightly integrated, requiring manual exports and imports. Sending e-cards or postcards as part of “Gifts That Grow” was handled by a separate system.
- **Ambitious e-commerce requirements** – the charity sells symbolic gifts such as “Iconic Baobab” or “Beekeeping Business.” Supporters can choose to send an e-card, post a physical card or make a donation only. Each gift needs multiple card designs, personalised messages and variable quantities. The new site had to handle these as WooCommerce products with bespoke options.

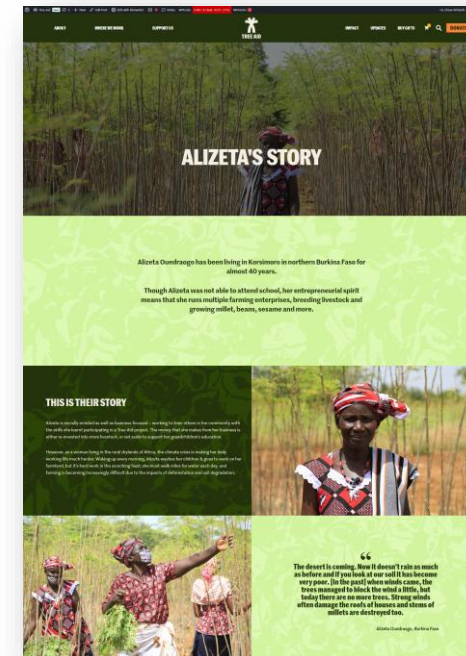
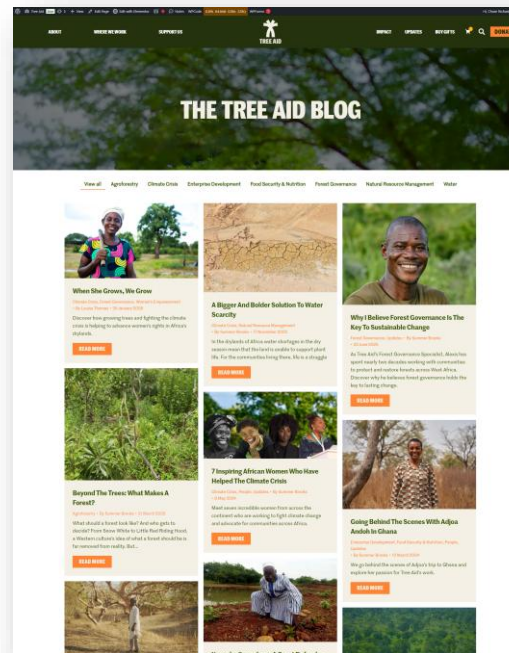
A World of Difference: WordPress + Elementor

Tree Aid selected **WordPress** with the **Elementor** page builder to replace their aging Umbraco installation. Elementor provides a visual, drag-and-drop interface that allows non-technical users to create complex layouts without code. By building reusable templates and dynamic widgets, the new site enables the marketing team to assemble pages from a library of components: hero blocks, impact statistics, quotes, forms and donation prompts.

Dynamic Landing Pages



Using Elementor's Theme Builder, one-off landing pages can be assembled quickly by combining templates and dynamic content. A campaign manager can choose a pre-designed header, insert a donation module, add story cards and call-to-action buttons without needing a developer. This flexibility contrasts sharply with the legacy site where such pages required hard-coded templates.



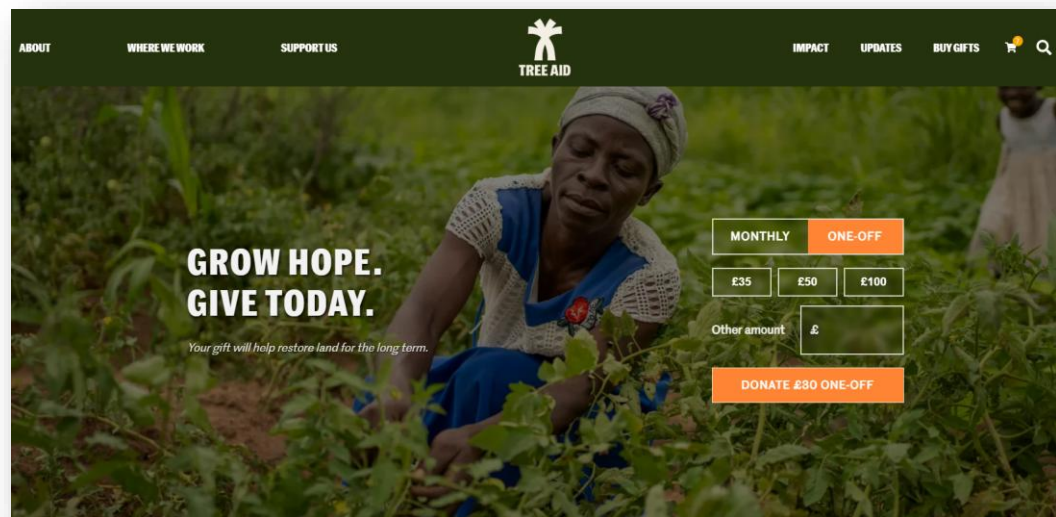
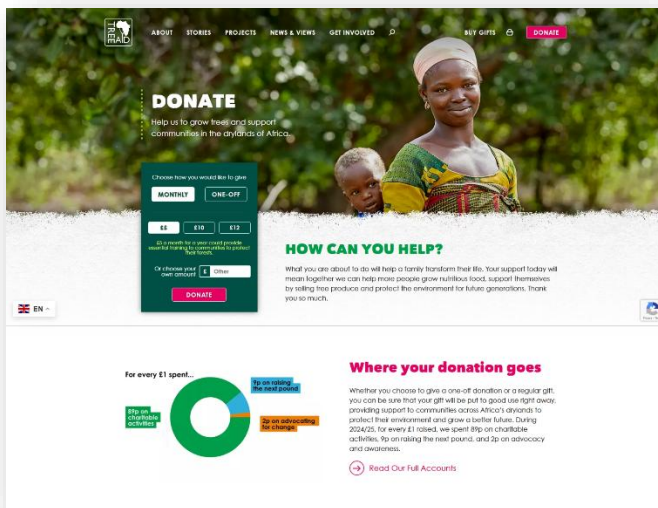
The site leverages custom Elementor widgets for impact stories, project overviews and news articles. Content is managed via native WordPress custom post types and Advanced Custom Fields (ACF), ensuring consistency while allowing editors to control copy, images and callouts.

The result is a site that maintains brand coherence and accessibility while giving staff the freedom to experiment with layouts.

Custom Donation Integration: WooCommerce + Stripe + Raiser's Edge

One of the most significant technical achievements was a **bespoke plugin** that bridges **WooCommerce**, **Stripe** and **Raiser's Edge**. While WooCommerce offers extensive e-commerce capabilities out of the box, donations for charities have unique requirements:

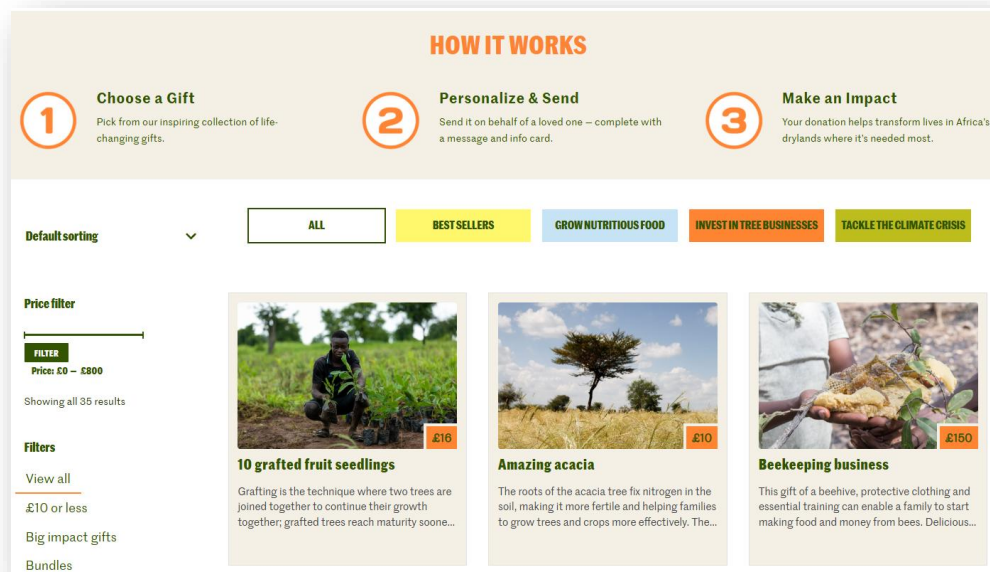
1. **Recurring and one-off donations** – donors can set up monthly contributions or make single gifts.
2. **Appeal coding and source tracking** – each transaction needs to be tagged with campaign codes and supporter IDs for Raiser's Edge.
3. **Gift Aid support** – UK taxpayers can boost donations by 25 %. The integration prompts donors to declare Gift Aid and records the necessary data.
4. **CMS Flexibility** – The Tree Aid team needed to be able to set up custom donation pages and modules, and customize styling and settings.



The custom plugin maps WooCommerce order data to Raiser’s Edge constituents, automatically creating or updating records. Payment information flows securely through Stripe. As a result, finance and fundraising teams no longer export spreadsheets or perform manual reconciliations. The donation process is smoother for supporters and reduces administrative friction.

E-Commerce and E-Card Gifts

Tree Aid’s “Gifts That Grow” scheme lets supporters buy symbolic gifts and send them as e-cards or physical postcards. On a product page such as “Iconic baobab,” the new site displays card options for each gift. Supporters can select **E-Card**, **Postcard** or **Donation Only**, choose a card design (e.g., Birthday, Congratulations, Mother and Baby or a photo of an Awuajani family) and specify quantity.



Personalisation includes adding a recipient’s name, message and send date. The e-card is generated and emailed automatically, while Raiser’s Edge receives the donation and attribution.

WooCommerce core **could not handle these options natively**, so the plugin extends product types to add card choices, message fields and scheduling. It ensures that each gift purchase triggers the right e-card template or postage workflow and records the donation in the CRM.

Brand Implementation and Design Challenges



Tree Aid's brand guidelines emphasise bold colours, large typography and photography that showcases the people they support. Translating these guidelines into a flexible website required careful consideration:

- **Custom templates** – while Elementor offers many design options, custom templates were built to adhere to spacing, colour contrast and typography rules. For example, hero sections use layered images and headings with accessible contrast; call-to-action buttons follow the charity’s palette; and iconography is unified.
- **Responsive design** – the site is fully responsive across mobile, tablet and desktop. Flexible grid layouts ensure that text remains readable and images retain their impact without breaking the design.
- **Dynamic blocks** – brand patterns such as quote panels, statistic cards and story grids were implemented as reusable blocks. Editors can insert them anywhere, choose colour variations and update content through ACF fields.

Comparing Legacy and New Experience

Old Umbraco Site

The legacy site emphasised big hero imagery and static pages. Editing content required developer intervention beyond basic blog posts. Donation prompts were handled by embed forms that sat alongside content, and supporters were redirected off-site for payment processing. The donation page explained how donations help communities and displayed a pie chart of spending; a small box asked visitors to choose a monthly amount or “Other” and click **Donate**. While informative, the flow was clunky and did not integrate directly with Raiser’s Edge, leading to manual data entry.

New WordPress + Elementor Site

The new site retains compelling storytelling but wraps it in a modern, interactive framework. The home page hero features large, emotive typography (“Resilient by Nature”) and calls to action. Navigation is simplified, and there is a prominent “Donate” button integrated with the custom checkout. Gifts are treated as products with imagery and optional e-card designs. The donation experience is seamless: users remain on the site, complete payment via Stripe and receive confirmation emails immediately. The marketing team can spin up campaign pages with unique layouts in minutes rather than days.

Outcomes and Impact

The new platform delivered clear benefits:

- **A 200% increase in conversion rate of visitors to donors**, averaged across web channels – well beyond any of the project team’s expectations and truly a result to be proud of.
- **Reduced risk and compliance exposure** – migrating away from unsupported Umbraco avoided security vulnerabilities associated with end-of-life software. WordPress receives regular updates and is maintained by a large community.
- **Improved supporter experience** – supporters can make donations or buy gifts without leaving the site. They receive personalised e-cards immediately, and the checkout is mobile-friendly. Gift Aid declarations are integrated.
- **Time savings for staff** – the marketing team can build pages and campaign landing pages without developer assistance. Updates that previously took days are now achievable in hours.
- **Streamlined fundraising operations** – the bespoke Stripe/Raiser’s Edge plugin automatically syncs transactions, reducing manual data entry and errors. Finance staff have greater confidence in reconciliation.
- **Flexibility for future growth** – the modular Elementor architecture and custom WooCommerce extensions mean new products, appeals or campaigns can be launched quickly.

Conclusion

Tree Aid’s migration from a dated Umbraco site to a modern WordPress + Elementor platform demonstrates how charities can transform their digital presence while meeting complex fundraising requirements. By building a bespoke Stripe and Raiser’s Edge integration and extending WooCommerce to support personalised e-cards, **FreshConstruct** longstanding operational bottlenecks. Editors now have full control over content, campaigns can be launched at short notice, and supporters enjoy a seamless giving experience. As Umbraco 8 reached end-of-life, Tree Aid not only mitigated risk but also leveraged the opportunity to adopt a bold new look and a flexible platform designed for growth.