



Your council's website: Accessibility tips & guidance, .gov.uk domains and best practice.

What you need to know.

Mark Tomkins, Founder & Creative Director of Aubergine



Your **workshop** presenter today: Mark Tomkins



Founder, Creative Director of Aubergine and Digital Accessibility Champion
Author of NALC's Website Accessibility & Publishing Guidelines.

The backdrop

- Good **communication is vital** to ensure that **everyone can access information**, services and to be able to have their voice heard.
- When it comes to parish and town councils, **digital communication has never been so important** as part of a council's **overall communications mix**.
- The **last 2+ years have shown** that using **websites**, and other forms of digital communication are all effective ways to get a message out, present information to a broad audience and build a strategic, two-way conversation inclusively.

And so, it must be accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities.

What we'll cover today

- Most common accessibility fail points – what to look out for
 - Headings, text formatting and styling
 - Page structuring – what and where to place content for best accessibility
 - Link formatting
 - How to treat images & video in an accessible way
 - Accessible document & file formats
 - How to check your site for accessibility easily and freely
 - Setting up a checking process
 - Maintaining compliance with accessibility laws & Transparency Code
 - Using .gov.uk domains –what's involved, and why you should do it.
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Requirement **refresher**

- September 2020 saw the introduction of accessibility publishing laws required for all UK public bodies to meet – **recent 2+ years have shown it couldn't have come at a better time!**
 - **WCAG2.1AA standard** required.
 - People with disabilities during the various lockdowns – **1 in 5 people in every community** has a disability of one form or another.
 - Content & **information** being accessible and **without barriers** was and is vital. As well as being law.
 - Accessibility isn't just about the technical stuff
 - **Language** used, **where you communicate** all play their part to **reduce communication barriers** and open up that two-way conversation
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What's the **goal**?

What do we want to achieve and why does communication get us there?

The more accessible the communication method, the more people it reaches:

- = Better communication**
 - = Better engagement**
 - = Inclusive and fair**
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Most common **accessibility** fail points

- Website construction method
 - Accessibility plugins
 - Tables
 - Accessible documents
 - Document file names
 - Page content formatting; headings, fonts, sizes
 - Link text
 - Images
 - Navigation
 - Pop ups, newsfeeds and integration with 3rd party websites, like Twitter & Facebook
 - Colours & contrasts
 - Accessibility checkers & processes
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Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 1

Fixable by you? **No**

1. Base **website construction** is old and does not have accessibility built into it.



Example: www.tring.gov.uk – they now have a new, compliant website from Aubergine

Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 2



Fixable by you? **Yes**

2. 'Accessibility plugins' (overlays) are bad for many people for several reasons. They:

- Do not make your website WCAG compliant
- Can fix minor problems but not serious user experience issues
- Conflict with and override a user's existing assistive technologies like screen readers
- Do not compare to manual accessibility audits
- Do not work well on mobile
- Do not offer an equal website experience for disabled users
- The main issue with overlays is that they don't change the underlying code of your website.

Solution: Commission an audit, commission repair or commission a new accessible website

Resource: <https://bighack.org/why-accessibility-overlays-and-widgets-do-not-improve-your-website-accessibility/>



Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 3

Fixable by you? **Yes**

3. Tables - Excellent for numerical data, terrible for textual information.

- Historically used for Minutes, Agendas to create a neat document
- Tables contain no navigation so the order of content is not defined
- Content can be read out of place
- Screen readers struggle to get past the first column.

Solution for Minutes & Agendas – **numerical bullet lists used in conjunction with headings**

[Example Minutes document](#)>

Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 4

Fixable by you? **Yes**

4. Non-accessible documents

- Documents older than Sept 2018 or provided by a third party + AGAR files do not need to comply
- Do not use scans
- Use the inbuilt MS Word accessibility tools and save as accessible PDF
- Use the inbuilt MS Excel accessibility tools.....
- Ensure your Accessibility Statement provides alternative options

Solution: Use inbuilt Accessibility checkers in Word, save as PDFs, don't publish if it's not accessible – if it's a Transparency Code requirement – you produced it so use the checking tools available to you. *AGAR exempt.

Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 5

Fixable by you? **Yes**

5. Document file naming

- Title your Word documents exactly what they are so that when you save the file as an accessible PDF and add it to your website, the link text will also be accessible. Using a plain English naming culture for files will also help you when you are searching for them!
- e.g 'Your Parish Council Minutes November 2021.pdf' tells the user what the file is, whereas 'Minutes-011121-final_v2.pdf' does not..

An extra tip tell the user what the file type is and how big the file is in the title:

e.g 'Your Parish Council Minutes November 2021 (PDF 672kb).pdf'

Solution: Call it what it is – 'who', 'what', 'when' + size + file type

Example of good document file names > <https://www.ebpc.co.uk/parish-council-meetings/>

Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 6

Fixable by you? **Yes**

6. Page content formatting – headings, fonts and styling.

- Use sequential headings, don't choose headings based on how they look
- Headings are useful for document accessibility, too
- Don't over style text – reduce bold, italics and all-caps to bare minimum
- Text size – go large!
- Keep coloured text to bare minimum and strong against background
- Don't underline text unless it's a link

Good example: Christchurch Town Council website: <https://www.christchurch-tc.gov.uk/>

More guidance> <https://www.aubergine262.com/headings-page-styling-and-text-formatting-with-accessibility-in-mind/>

Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 7

Fixable by you? **Yes**

7. **Link text** – goes hand-in-hand with document naming.

- Stop use of 'click here' 'read more' or 'download'
- Be descriptive – tell the user where or to what the link goes
- Screen readers group links together do be sure not to duplicate links

A bad link is:

10-07-21 Minutes click here (click here to what or where? The link text needs to tell the user to what or where they are going if clicked)

Solution: wrap the link in good, contextual descriptive language and the link text is clear:

e.g. Eaton Bray Parish Council Minutes December 2021 (682kb).PDF or if linking to a website or web page: '...you can find out more about what happened at the December Eaton Bray Parish Council Meeting on their website' or 'find out more at the Eaton Bray Parish Council website'

Example of good document file names > <https://www.ebpc.co.uk/parish-council-meetings/>

Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 8

Fixable by you? **Yes**

8. Images – great for those with sight, a barrier and hurdle for those without.

- ALT TEXT – Alternative Textual Description is required for all images that contribute to the page content
- Salient but descriptive
- If the image is a graphic or adds nothing to the textual content, mark it as 'decorative'
- Make sure the image file name is also descriptive (not 'DSC28474.jpg')

e.g



Good: ``

Bad: ``

or

`` or too long.

Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 9

9. Images – text in images. Using an image with text embedded.

- The text is not readable by screen readers
- Images with text embedded need ALT TEXT
- Ensure all poster information is also on the web page
- Screen readers & Google Chrome audible describe a page based on ALT TEXT
- Information cannot be exclusive to those with sight
- Event posters, 3rd party provided or internally-created graphics, infographics are the main problem

Bad ``

Good ``

Fixable by you? **Yes**



Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 10

10. Images – adding ALT TEXT in Wordpress

- Update your version of Wordpress
- Other web platforms have ALT TEXT input fields
- Properly name the image before uploading
- Arrows, icons, stock images – mark as decorative
- Aubergine's platform won't allow you to add an image without adding an ALT TEXT

Fixable by you? **Yes**

Attachment Details



Edit image

File name: The-Rye-Outside-Gym-Rig-with-punchbag-scaled.jpg
File type: image/jpeg
Uploaded on: 22 June 2021
File size: 1 MB
Dimensions: 2560 by 2240 pixels

Alternative Text: **The Rye Outside Gym Rig With Punchbag**
Describe the purpose of the image; leave empty if the image is purely decorative.

Title:

Caption:

Description:

Uploaded By: Aubergine

Uploaded To: [The Rye Recreation Ground - new outside gym](#)

Copy Link: <https://www.abpc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/39/2021/06/>

Required fields are marked *

[View attachment page](#) | [Edit more details](#) | [Delete Permanently](#)

Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 11

11. Navigation – the menu bars or tabs

- Start by running the WAVE byWebaim Chrome browser checker
- Start at the homepage and use just the tab key – see where it takes you
- Consider mega navs instead of long dropdowns
- Mobile navigation is equally important
- Get a web developer's help

Fixable by you? **No**

Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 12

Fixable by you? **No**

12. Pop ups, newsfeeds and integration with 3rd party websites, like Twitter & Facebook

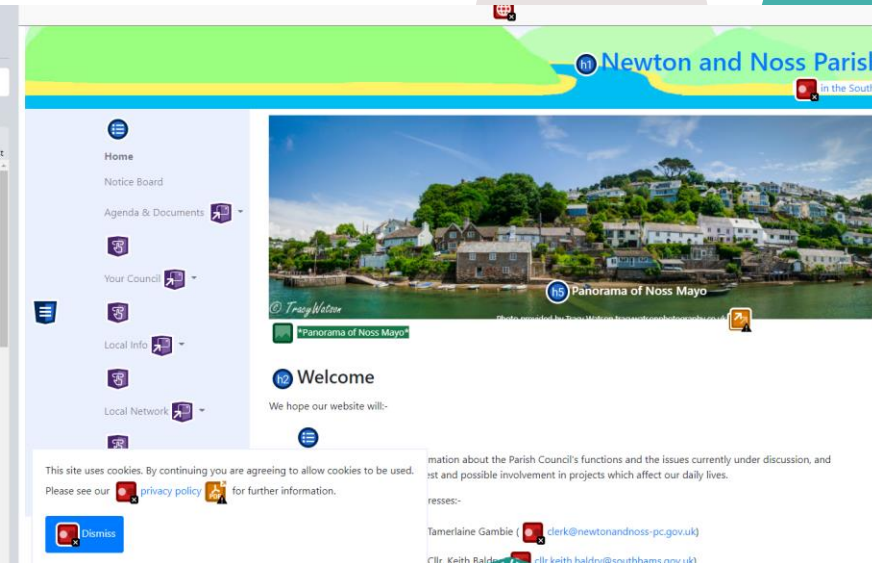
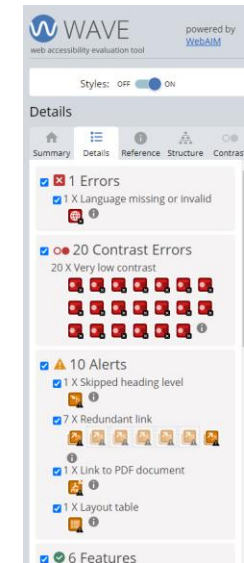
- Don't do it
 - It's a terrible user experience for sighted users, impossible to use by non-sighted visitors!
 - It won't be accessible – the 3rd party content and code will not meet the same requirements
 - It's about you, not your users
 - Don't do it.
-

Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 13

13. Colours and contrast

- Blindness & sight issues, dyslexia, learning difficulties & old age!
- Clear, well-contrasted and defined colours
- Avoid pastels as primary colours
- Don't put text on coloured backgrounds unless high contrast
- Don't use coloured text unless high contrast
- Check the link text, visited link text & mouseover colours
- Use browser checker each time you edit a page

Fixable by you? **No**



Example of contrast and colour issues: <http://newtonandnoss-pc.gov.uk/>

Most common **accessibility** fail points – and how to fix them part 14

Fixable by you? **Yes**

13. Checking tools and services.

- You must have a checking method – how else will you know?
 - Accessibility is not just a tick box exercise – check the technical **and the comprehension**
 - Keep an Excel file of all the pages of your site & record & checking routine
 - Use browser checkers and *actually* read the content for comprehension
 - Ask someone else to read it.
 - **Free checkers:** Wave by Webaim (Chrome, Edge & Firefox) / SiteImprove / Chrome Lighthouse
 - **Paid service:** We use Pope.tech it's a good balance of thoroughness & ease-of-comprehension
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- Good: Example WCAG scan report Bad: Example of WCAG scan report with failures

.Gov.uk domains: what are they, why you should use them and what you need to know

14. What you need to know.

- It's a domain suffix only available to government bodies
- It's managed by CDDO (Cabinet Digital & Data Office) & currently JISC
- Only authorised registrars can set up and manage them
- They add a high level of authenticity & trust to the content & messaging
- Additional security benefits – domain locking, NCSC scanning, greater security processes, GDPR & FOI/SAR situations
- Requirements include GDPR compliant email services – the clerk/RFO as a min. must have domain-based email & WCAG compliant website
- Not a legal requirement yet but encouraged
- Costs ~£100 + VAT pa – depending on the supplier's included services
- You should consider it for your IT budget.

Fixable by you? **Yes, mostly**

Thank you

