



Be an effective council online

Session 1 of 3

Web accessibility,
publishing compliance
and .gov.uk domains





About your speaker, Mark Tomkins

Founder and Creative Director at National Digital Award Gold Award winning, Aubergine and website accessibility expert & champion.

Aubergine are the UK's leaders in providing fully compliant and accessible websites for town & parish councils and official partner of SLCC for the provision of compliant websites for councils.

Mark has over 30+ years' experience in the web industry.

Mark is also the author of the NALC Website Accessibility & Publishing Guidebook and are advisors to 500+ town & parish councils on website accessibility compliance.

They also provide advice and guidance on the [.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) domain framework and are JISC and CDDO authorised to register and manage [.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) domains.

Mark is an experienced public speaker & trainer as well as being a parish councillor of 10+ years in his private life and is ILCA qualified, too.





The experts



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David Hall



David Hall is the Founder and Managing Director of CloudyIT, a technology company that supports over 200 Town and Parish Councils nationally.

David started the company 21 years ago as an internet cafe and now from Cloudy's base in the market town of Buckingham he employs over 20 staff.

As well as running CloudyIT, David is the Chair of Cloudy Foundation, a charity setup to support young people develop new digital skills and gain work valuable workplace experience and opportunities.

More information can be found on David's [Linked profile](#).



Dan Purchase



Daniel Purchase is Co-Director of Breakthrough Communications, who specialise in helping councils and organisations communicate and engage effectively and compliantly.

Daniel's background is in community campaigning and developing the skills of individuals and teams. He was previously Head of People Development for one of the country's largest campaigning organisations and has developed and implemented training programmes for thousands of volunteers and staff across a multitude of organisations.

Daniel has also previously served as a town, district and county councillor as well as having been a Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services.



What we'll cover today

1. **A refresher of website accessibility meaning and importance**
2. **How to approach compliance with the regulations**
3. **Practical tips to use to keep websites accessible**
4. **How to check and monitor your website for accessibility issues**
5. **The .gov.uk domain and what it means**
6. **How you get a .gov.uk domain**
7. **Further information & help**



What is web accessibility?

It's a way of **presenting web pages** and the **information** on them in a way that works for **people with disabilities** and for those who use 'assistive technology'.

Assistive technology is **software & hardware on a user's computer that helps** them interact with a website - such as a screen reader for those with sight loss or low vision.



Why does it matter?

1 in 5 people in every community has a disability or situation that makes it difficult for them to access or interact with websites.

This includes those with physical, learning or age-related challenges as well as colour blindness, dyslexia, physical disabilities and blindness.



Websites aren't accessible by default

Websites need to be made in a special way for them to work for those with disabilities. Just because the website is new does not mean it's accessible or compliant.

You can't put the blueberries in the muffin after it's baked.





Specify compliance

If your website **wasn't built with WCAG 2.1AA as part of the brief, it won't be accessible** and you are creating barriers for your parishioners.



Public information for everyone

Councils publish public information - every member of the public has a legal right to access the information without any barriers.



It's the right thing to do and the law

It's law for all UK public bodies' websites (councils of all levels except parish meetings) to meet the international standard called WCAG 2.1AA - that means it works to a set measurement of testing.



**Here are some basic principles
to make the experience for
those with disabilities better...**



Plug the gap

Many councils and service providers choose an **'accessibility plugin'**.

They do not make the website properly accessible and do not meet the WCAG2.1AA requirement and should not be used.

They actually **create greater barriers** than they solve.

The disability community all agree on this.



Images & graphics need descriptions

Always use ALT Text descriptions for every image and avoid embedding words into images, even if you add ALT Text. Access to information in an image must not be exclusive to those with sight.



Make link text descriptive

Make sure link text is descriptive. Stop using 'click here' or 'here' or 'download'

Make link text descriptive e.g. **'A Parish Council Minutes September 2023.pdf'**

The user will know what they are going to open.

The same goes for links to websites.



Clear text

Use a good, clear open typeface (font). Not small, faintly coloured or too fancy.



Add structure to the page

Use sequential headings on the web page to section content

(use them in your Word docs, too!)

It's how those with sight loss navigate a page

H1, H2, H3 etc... and not chosen by how they look!

Tutorials: www.aubergine262.com/category/web-accessibility



“Not at the table, Carlos”*

Avoid tables for anything other than financial information

They have no navigation and screen readers do not know what order to read the rows and columns.

***Name the film this quote comes from.**



Colours & contrast

Keep colours to a strict high contrast

Avoid pastels and light colours

Don't use coloured text on coloured backgrounds.



Accessible documents

Ensure the documents you upload to your website are in an accessible format.

PDFs created using MS Word are fine as long as they are checked but you may want to actually put the content on the web page rather than a document for better accessibility. Word documents create a socio-economic barrier because they require the user to have a Microsoft Office subscription.

TIP: in Word, select 'save as' PDF and not print to PDF. The former keeps text formatting, latter makes an image of the page.



Scans

Avoid scans of documents

Exclusions:

Declarations of Interest/Registers of Interest where used

AGAR files

Mythbuster: You don't need to upload signed documents to the website.



Write for people who aren't clerks

Write the content for normal people - try and think that the person reading your page or document **won't have your knowledge or experience** so write in **plain English**, avoid jargon and keep acronyms to a minimum (screen readers announce them slowly, one letter at a time!)



Measure twice, cut once

Have a checking process for when you update a web page - **use a free web browser tool called WAVE by webaim** - it'll give you a good snapshot of any accessibility issues.

Download the browser extension here: <https://wave.webaim.org/extension/>



WAVE powered by WebAIM web accessibility evaluation tool

Styles: OFF ON

Summary

Summary Details Reference Order Structure Contrast

0

Errors

0

Contrast Errors

6

Alerts

48

Features

31

Structural Elements

50

ARIA

View details >

Congratulations! No errors were detected! Manual testing is still necessary to ensure compliance and optimal accessibility.

The following apply to the entire page:

en-GB

aria-label="Skip to main content and Accessibility"



Eaton Bray Parish Council logo

Home

Parish Council *tabindex=0*

Neighbourhood

News

Contact

aria-label="Main website navigation"

Eaton Bray Parish Council

Our historical rural village in the heart of Bedfordshire

Search Keyword

Submit search*

Quick links

- Meeting minutes
- Contact the Council
- Council Surgery dates

aria-label="Header section of the website. Containing: The logo, Primary navigation, Page title and Search box"





Make a statement

Update your accessibility statement - there are good model documents

available but understand what it means – it's a living document. It's a reflection of your council's position on managing its accessibility requirements.

If it's **3+ years old it's likely out of date.**

Don't forget – Council need to ratify and adopt it. It's a policy.



Change your mindset

This is an opportunity, not an inconvenience as it means you can **talk to and get the council's message across to the 20% of your community** that, thus far, have **struggled to access the information** to which they are entitled.



To .gov.uk or not to gov...

- It's a domain suffix **only available to government bodies**
- **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, protection against domain theft & hijacking
- Your website and service could potentially show up higher in search results



- **Gives your domain better legal protection because it's based in a UK jurisdiction**

Requirements include:

- **GDPR compliant email services** – the clerk/RFO as a min.
- **A WCAG2.1AA compliant website**
- **It's not a legal requirement yet** but encouraged
- **Costs ~£100 + VAT pa** – depending on the supplier's included services
- **Consider it at precept time** & additional email services.



How to get a .gov.uk domain

- Look for an authorised .gov.uk domain registrar (Aubergine is one)
>Here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/choose-a-good-registrar-or-dns-provider>
- Get council to decide on the name before applying
location-pc.gov.uk or **locationparishcouncil.gov.uk**
location-tc.gov.uk or **locationtowncouncil.gov.uk** are the only options
- Think about shortest but most clear
- Think about email and who might need it – the clerk at a minimum.



How to get a .gov.uk domain

- **Needs to be GDPR compliant service – we recommend Microsoft’s O365**
 - Gives control for clerk/admin over all accounts
 - UK-based data stored
 - GDPR compliant
 - Support for when you need it
 - Robust.
- **Consider a professional council-sector supplier**



Further .gov.uk information

Further information on the .gov.uk framework is available here on the CDDO .gov.uk website:

- [Benefits of getting a .gov.uk domain - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [How you are accountable for protecting your .gov.uk domain - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Keeping your domain name secure - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)



Ask for help

It can be daunting to start so **seek some guidance and ask Aubergine** to set you off on the right foot!

Compliant website packages from £499+VAT: www.aubergine262.com/wcag

Tutorials & helpful guides: www.aubergine262.com/category/web-accessibility

WAVE by Webaim accessibility page checker: <https://wave.webaim.org/extension/>

NALC Website Accessibility & Publishing Guidebook: <https://www.aubergine262.com/nalc-guidebook>

PDF accessibility checker: <https://checkers.eiii.eu/en/pdfcheck/>

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