Reimagine the Forest: Examining the Accessibility of Websites of Organisations in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire

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About Forest Pathways

We are Forest Pathways (FP), one of the UK's leading Accessibility researchers supporting blind, severely sighted and partially sighted people. Today, there are more than half a million websites that are not accessible in the United Kingdom, alone. FP plays a crucial role in creating a world where there are no barriers to people with sight loss. We want all of society, all communities and all individuals to understand about Accessibility.

Project Leader's Statement

Digital Accessibility has been studied over many years by both Barnwood and Forest Pathways. By working in collaboration with Barnwood Trust and Digital Accessibility, Inclusion, Support and Innovation (DAISI) we have successfully completed the project set out many months ago. We examined the following

- Physical aspects of accessing the internet (including Broadband and fiber optic availability) and mobile access in the Forest of Dean in relation to the national availability. This is available through DAISI.
- Barriers that people face when accessing digital services. (Many elderly people struggle in fear of using the service, for example)
- Examining the technical accessibility barriers of websites in the Forest of Dean. This is the purpose of the report.

Alongside examining these three key points above, we initiated partnerships with DAISI and the Good Things Foundation to tackle other areas of Accessibility in relation to Digital Divides. It comes as no surprise the important timing of this report as it

is expected that in Gloucestershire that "by 2032, the projection [of people] with sight-loss exceeds 31,000". Gloucestershire Council has adamantly stated that "the digital divide is an important social issue of our time. It's time for all of us to come together, realise the potential of the digital world, and most importantly ensure no one is left behind."

In our time researching we interacted with 70 members of the public about Digital Divides. Taking to the streets of Coleford, Bream, Speech House and Lydney.

About Accessibility

Just under 1 in 5 people in the United Kingdom has a disability. To us, web accessibility means that websites, tools, and technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them. Disabled People experience life differently to Non-Disabled People and we recognise the barriers that make life hard for Disabled People. For example, someone who is Blind or Severely sighted might use assistive technology to navigate the web, navigate a work-platform, or to understand images, online. As such, these privileges that Non-Disabled People have, must be modified to be accessible, or, in the case of new creations, must be innovated with Accessibility in mind at the foundation. Architects would not design a public building without wheelchair access, why would you design a website the same way? At Forest Pathways we believe, too, that disabilities and sight loss are a spectrum, and every eye condition is different. This means that one size does not fit all when understanding website accessibility. Different people will rely on different ways to understand their online environment. To get it right, it is of critical importance to understand what adjustments can be made to create an inclusive infrastructure and design.

Summary

The importance of web accessibility cannot be stated enough in ensuring Blind, Visually Impaired and Disabled people can live their lives with as much independence as possible, if they choose. Both the pandemic, and the sudden urgent calls of creating meaningful employment for Disabled people, has sharpened society's understanding of work, and of Accessibility as a whole.

Our research has successfully demonstrated that there are a range of factors that affect Accessibility. Including lack of awareness, lack of resources, and lack of paid manual testers who are trained to recognise faults.

Inclusive design is better for everyone and is not just an after-thought of satiating an affected community. Through pronounced effort, everyone can access and enjoy all areas of service, education and work, not just within the public sector.

Methodology

Data Analytics

Estimates from the Work and Pensions' Family Resources Survey "indicated that 16.0 million people in the UK had a disability (Legislative Definition) in the 2021/22 financial year."[1] representing roughly a quarter of the population of the United Kingdom. Whilst there is an urgency for this report to include the national scope, this is not the time. This report's scope will be specifically concerned with the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, England. It is reported that the population in the Forest of Dean

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[1] https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9602/

in 2021 was totaled near 87,000.[2] It can be estimated from these figures that roughly 20,880 people in the Forest of Dean are Disabled People. Further, as the legal definition of disability is exclusive to reported disabilities, unreported, underreported and unknown disabilities mean that this figure is likely to be higher, especially within the region's elderly population. It is noteworthy that women are disproportionately affected by this because women are more likely to experience exclusion from reported data due to long-standing social barriers preventing them from inclusion. This information is important because it affects the approaches required to create Accessibility.

Disabilities affect every period in an individual's life so there ought to be accessibility of service for all areas in all fields. So much so that the scope must be as wide as possible. For this testing, the criterion for evaluation is 500 websites' landing pages as defined by the partners, specific to the Forest of Dean.

Association is defined in the following manner. Association is a loose term meaning websites belonging to or owned by individuals who operate their businesses in the region of the Forest of Dean. This means if there is a registered business address in the Forest of Dean (within ~8 miles) and there is an associated website, it can be included. Further to this, if there is a business that has a branch in the Forest of Dean area but is headquartered elsewhere - this can be included. Additionally, there is a feasibility consideration whereby, if a resident of the Forest of Dean is likely to seek services from an organisation online, then these websites can be included in the study. From this information, 500 organisations and their websites have been collated for processing.

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[2] https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E07000080/

These processes included: the identification and removal of duplicates, the removal of irrelevant data and the re-themeing of the organisations or initiatives associated with the websites so that they were compliant with the working standards of the project. Once the data had been processed through our robust methods, this information was transformed into Excel to create a directory of errors. This provided insights regarding the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire. The results of these assessments were true at the time of their generation in November 2023.

Further to this, the research team were provided with a website directory which had to be tidied up and prepared for analysis. We also had to identify if the websites were still functioning and assumed a great deal of cynicism (as is best practice) towards the data. Only 20 websites were requested on the 11th of November 2023.

All the information gathered during this study was publicly available. For further information, or for any questions about the data and research for this part of the methodology please contact Henry through woodlandhenry@gmail.com.

Manual Testing

The Manual Testing process did not include the 500 websites that were analysed through the Data Analytics Officer and the chosen scope for this project was the requested directory provided on the 11th of November 2023.

The objectives of these Manual Tests were to determine the performance, challenged by the Manual Testers to varying results. This was achieved in three ways. Firstly, the websites

were evaluated by a Non-Disabled Person and were checked to see if the websites were safe to use, online, and had no visible errors. Following this, the manual testers challenged the accessibility of the websites through usage to see if there was access for the manual testers to use certain functions related to the website's purpose. The results of these tests were rich in detail and these responses were retained for internal use. The results were then converted into a numerical form to easily demonstrate accessibility on a scale of one to five. These scores were then internally verified by the Data Analysis Officer to determine their reliability. The scores were in range.

The Accessibility Survey was an online-form survey run from November 2023 to January 2023. It included those who had varying degrees of sight-loss.

It provided over 100 responses from visually impaired people. All the quotes used in this research are from our Manual Testers, who have been anonymised to protect confidentiality. All Manual Testers are from the United Kingdom.

Forest Pathways would like to thank all the Auditors who participated with the process, without which, this report would not have been possible.

The recommendations in this report focus on calls to all businesses, organisations and local councils within Gloucestershire to be deliberate and intentional with website construction and to amend any outstanding Accessibility errors to prepare for 2025.

For further information, or for any questions about the data and research presented in this report, please get in contact with Guy at guywoodland@icloud.com

Introduction

There is roughly one website for every eight people on the planet. Websites are used primarily to present, share, or

display some information or content online. For example, artists use them to share their work, companies use them to generate sales and charities use them to provide information. All these functions enable participation in economic activity, which everyone should have the opportunity to do. For those who have poorly structured, or 'messy' websites - they preclude access to Disabled People who must use assistive technologies to navigate virtual spaces.

When accessibility issues are not fully addressed, Disabled People become excluded or restricted from participation in economic activity. This can have the effect of making people more reliant on specific companies, or service providers, which in a sense obstructs free market principles and leaves the non-compliant organisations or companies vulnerable. By working through local councils and local organisations to encourage participation in Accessibility practices, Forest Pathways plans to remove this imbalance in the market and to further protect Disabled People from present digital exclusion whilst also providing them with meaningful employment.

All digital creators have been encouraged to consider how they produce their digital content with support of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), and this has been supported through continuous developments in their guidelines including their most recent release of the WCAG 2.2 on the 5th of October 2023.[3] The guidelines cite four important elements to website content construction, where all content must be perceivable, operable, understandable and robust.[4] Content creators can demonstrate their conformance to the guidelines

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[3] https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/ Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2.
[4] https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/

by declaring on their websites their accessibility rating (A, AA, or AAA) to inform users. These remain, as of the 15th of February 2024, as mere guidelines until the government announces it will modify the legislation.

WCAG 2.2 and FPAT

At Forest Pathways we praise the success of WCAG in closing the gap on Digital Data Parity and driving Accessibility to make websites more effective across the country. The various software that has become publicly available that helps evaluate websites on a page-by-page basis is exceptionally important for designers and developers who are now producing web content. This software reports on the following: Errors, Contrast Errors, Alerts, Features, Structures, and Accessible Rich Internet Applications (ARIA). On average 175 websites are being constructed every minute (Forbes, 2023) and the WCAG standard and the software providing assessment helps individual developers benchmark their progress towards webpages with 0 errors.

The software that rapidly evaluates how Accessible a website is, has its limitations, however. As with these sorts of testing the results of using these websites help demonstrate how effective a website is in relation to a single page. This is limiting as it still relies on the sensibility of developers who often do not include Disabled People in the construction of their websites or do not act on input from Disabled People. This is articulated by one Manual Tester who reported that some developers included in the study have "little to no experience in creating a holistic website".

This illuminates the current limitations on the rapid analysis software perfectly and the standard that developers draw from. Websites are not simply a series of stand-alone documents that move from one to the next, websites are a journey of interconnected parts that can only be understood as a reference to its parts AND its whole. As such evaluating the Accessibility of 'interconnectedness' is where the challenge exists.

In this research we explore 'interconnectedness' through Pathway Assessment. Pathway Assessment is defined by the lived experience of the users of a website who go on-line to achieve something. Here, websites are a tool to accomplish anything based on the needs of the user. In the study we created scenarios of something that the website could feasibly be used for. For example, if I wanted to purchase a specific album, a user might go to several websites to view their collection. Here a website's purpose is defined as a transactional information system. However, if the user realised that they wanted to subscribe to the music service (as for example, it's cheaper) they would change their pathway. Websites as such present multiple realities. These realities are not infinite, and each reality can be prescribed to a general purpose. These purposes are defined by digital services experts in the following seven ways: to sell, to generate leads, to inform, to entertain, to serve, to present or to connect.[5] The research team, as such designed For Purpose Accessibility Tests (FPAT) to probe these purposes from the website directory establishing how to challenge the websites and their realities to determine if it was fit for the purposes above. This was achieved in two ways. Firstly, there were general questions

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[5] https://www.bluehillsdigital.com/articles/website-purpose-seven-types/

that were asked of all the manual testers for the directory of 20. Then four questions were tailored to each website to challenge their purposes to understand how Accessible they really are.

Working together to improve Accessibility in the Forest of Dean

The Forest of Dean is a region in Gloucestershire, England. The region is characterised by more than 110 square miles of mixed woodland. There are 50 towns and villages in the larger District Council area. The council is the local government based in Coleford, providing district-level services. County-level services are provided by Gloucestershire County Council. The council works with organisations such Barnwood Trust and Forest Voluntary Action Forum who seek to ensure that Gloucestershire is a place where everyone with a disability or mental health challenge is valued. This project was funded directly by Barnwood Trusts' Digital Inclusion Fund initiative distributed through FVAF. This was a one-off funding initiative aimed at addressing digital exclusion experienced by Disabled people and people with mental health challenges. Forest Pathways and the team have been regarded as "Excellent", producing "high quality" work that has surpassed the initial expectations of the project.
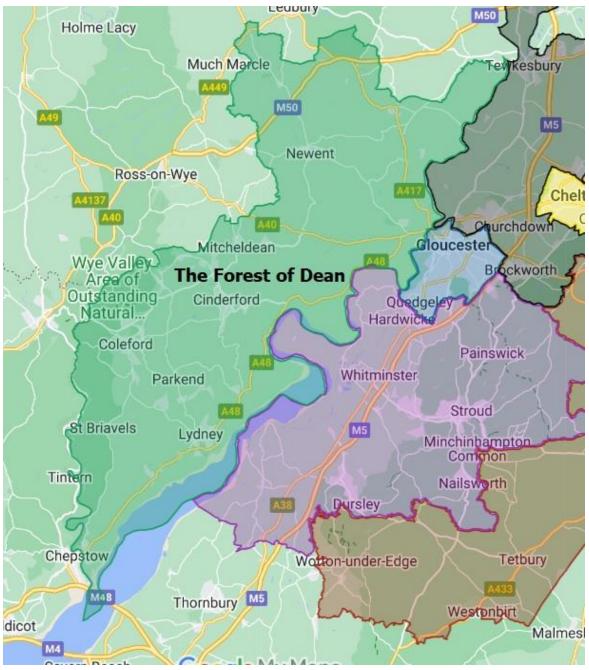
Figure 1.1 A map of the Forest of Dean with district boundaries. The district is neighboured by Tewkesbury to the north-east, Gloucester to the east, and Stroud to the south-east. This information was collated in December 2023.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Global report on assistive technology offered recommendations required to steer governments and other stakeholders towards achieving universal access to assistive technology where, point 8, specifically states "Develop enabling environments that benefit everyone involved in assistive technology".[6]

Looking specifically at Gloucestershire, the region has 1.15% of the United Kingdom's active companies registered amongst its towns and cities. In all time there have been 109,333 total incorporations in the region, however, 47% of these have been dissolved and 5,298 have ceased trading. (Sparklines, 2024). As such there are a recorded 57,458 active companies within Gloucestershire. Based on our initial assessment there are 28,729 businesses in Gloucestershire which have websites and an estimated 24,420 of these businesses will have accessibility issues that need resolving. This leaves 28,729 businesses remaining who currently do not have any active websites.

It is reported that the population in the Forest of Dean in 2021 was totaled near 87,000.[7] It can be estimated from these figures that roughly 20,880 people in the Forest of Dean are Disabled people. Britain is a robust economy and Disabled People (and the care and support they might require) in the United Kingdom contributes massively to the economy estimated to be around £60 billion. The Forest of Dean represents 0.1% of the English economy.

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[6] https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/assistive-technology#:~:text=Develop%20enabling%20environments%20that%20benefit%20everyone%20involved%20in%20assistive%20technology.

[7] https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E07000080/

21% of Forest of Dean lack the full basic digital skills with 8% having no basic digital skills at all. 10% of working adults in the region are without basic digital skills and an alarming statistic from the government states that "that registered disabled people are 4 times as likely to be offline."

Assessing Impact (statement by the Data Analyst)

International comparisons offer a unique perspective when assessing the project's impact on the Forest of Dean. This is understood as a 'potential liability'. Potential liability refers to the loss of money for failing to act and causing damage to people affected by inaccessible data. In the United Kingdom, the only legal grievance that was brought forward about Accessibility (with relation to Blind, SSI and partially sighted Disabled People) in work was a figure that was resolved outside of the courts (RNIB vs).

Within the directory that was provided there were 20 organisations in the Forest of Dean. These organisations are as follows. Sedbury Space, Lydney Community Centre, Warm and Well, Lydcare, Honour Thy Women Group, Home Start NWG, Go Volunteer Glos, Forest Sensory Services, Glebe Chapel, Forest Talk, Forest Read Easy, Forest Pulse, Inclusion Gloucestershire, Crossroads Gloucestershire, Forest of Dean Council, Gloucestershire Carers Hub, Christians Against Poverty, Barnwood, Autistic Adult Drop-In, and Artlift.

For the purposes of this study, organisations that provided no information regarding the number of employees, trustees or volunteers, or were listed with less than 15 employees, trustees, or volunteers will be defaulted as 15 for calculation.

Whilst Charities in the United Kingdom are privileged in their position to not follow reasonable adjustment practices for their websites, we can still use the model provided by US Legislation to determine a liability value associated to the current website failings.

The US Legislation, where much of our work has developed from the research and progression of legislation, sets out a clear calculation of compensatory damages. The first type of damage is special damage (usually associated with increased medical fees, which we will exclude as no provable damage has been caused) and instead focus on general damages.

General damages are difficult to calculate but there are thresholds set with limits to the amount that can be claimed by companies failing to create reasonable adjustments in their environments. This threshold is determined by the number of employees in an organisation. There is the critical issue of vicarious liability that comes into consideration which essentially means that any wrongful action ("construction of an inaccessible website, or service in light of being informed of such substantial findings and evidence"), the law will hold organisations and their trustees accountable on the ground that they control the employees and volunteers. As such, the law will declare that charities providing services and activities through their inaccessible website are thusly liable for any losses incurred by

any wrongdoing committed during the delivery of services and activities rendered.

In the 20 organisations listed above, I located the number of employees in each organisation. I have outlined this in Appendix 5, providing a breakdown of employees, volunteers and trustees associated with each organisation. From this I translated the maximum compensation, in US dollars, that could be awarded in a suit based on the upper *and* lower limit of the number of total members in an organisation. The limits were then converted into a value in Sterling Pounds (conversion rate true of 6th April 2024). Whilst estimates such as these are unenforceable in the United Kingdom due to lack of our legislation, we can use these figures as a direct method of understanding the value of the Forest Pathways   project   deliverables.

From the research the resources that have been produced are the most common perceivable errors shared across the organisations that we handled before the specialised resources were produced. It would be fair to assume, as we gravitate towards 2025 the implications being the necessity to adopt European practices (or general improvement with Accessibility across the world), that these resources would yield savings for the above organisations with justified limits set between £1,027,000 and £1,066,500 (**Average: £1,046,750**) where those organisations   are   vulnerable.

The total number of resources delivered (before methodology, training for the Ambassador program, specialist skills of the Data Analyst, expertise of the Manual Testers), totaled 277 (217 above the original expectation). This would suggest that per resource recommendation equates to future savings between

£3,707.58 and £3,850.18 based on specified limits. **(Average: £3778.88). This figure is true as of 8th May 2024.**

Another way to look at this as well in the collective of organisations, the cost comes to roughly, £17/error.

Assistive Technology

As we stated, all people should be able to engage in economic activity through the internet. As such, the internet should be accessible to all.

- Some people use glasses to read a screen, people often forget that this is assistive technology.
- Some people use technology such as Screen Readers. A screen reader is a type of software. It reads aloud what is on a screen of a computer, tablet or smartphone. Often this can have a Braille display. There are lots of different types of screen readers depending on what the user wants to achieve. The two included in this study are JAWS and Apple Screen Reader.
- Some people use technology such as Magnifier Technology. Magnification assists those by enlarging text in print and on computer screens. These products can range from a simple magnifier glass that attaches to a screen, or screen enlarging software that can be controlled with the mouse.
- Forest Pathways recognise that there are many other forms of assistive technology that support Disabled People. However, for this study's purposes, we have omitted them; for a complete list, please refer to the WHO report on Assistive Technology.

Overall Findings

Of the 20 websites provided by the partners the following can be reported:

Data Analytics Report

Total Errors: 141

Total Web Pages: 11707

Estimated Errors: 62339

Average Lighthouse Reading: 80% (95% is the minimum required)

Manual Testing Report (Directory Average)

FP003f (ND) = 15.1 (Accessible with Errors)

FP002c (Mag) = 28.4 (Heavily Inaccessible)

FP002e (Survey) = 15 (Accessible with Errors)

FP002d (Apple SR) = 28.35 (Heavily Inaccessible)

FP002f (JAWS) = 26.25 (Heavily Inaccessible)

Cronbach's α: 0.76 (2 dp) = Acceptable Range

This next section of this report provides context to these scores to give a cohesive understanding of why there are contradictions to the WCAG system against the FPAT process. We have been meticulous in selecting which Case Studies best amplify these contradictions.

Case Study Findings: Website A

Using an example from the Directory of 20, we can demonstrate this more closely. Website A[8] has 486 pages on their website. On each page there are roughly 3 errors detected by the rapid-analysis software. This software has detected contrasting issues, issues with titles, viewpoint errors and meta-tagging issues. 3 errors per page (1458 errors) would be presumed to be quite compliant in the grand scheme of things. The website's purposes are to inform, provide a service, connect people and present information. The average Manual Testers score for this website, following conversion, was reported at 25.75 (heavily inaccessible).

However, when the Manual Testers began to challenge the effectiveness of Website A there were numerous complaints about the Accessibility. Manual Tester B reported that it was "one of the worst landing pages on a website" where their "screen reader was unable to pick up on any menu-based options" practically prohibiting usage of the entire website. 60% of the auditors could not locate the postcode of the business associated with the website and 80% of the users could not locate the 'Accessibility Statement' of the website. Furthermore, Manual Tester B stated when attempting to navigate the website: "Even with my vast experience using screen readers and known [sic] how to access a website efficiently, I was unable to do this." It is worth highlighting that, the website in this example uses assistive technology known as 'Recite' which was reported to cause "disorientation" (Manual Tester E), the technology was conflicting with magnification software and one

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[8] All websites have been anonymised for report writing.

Manual Tester encouraged the developers of the website to "stop using widgets" entirely (Manual Tester B). This construction practice is slowly being removed.

Imagine a scene where Disabled People have communicated about this peculiar nuance they are often met with resistance. Imagine; if possible, that a hypothetical developer has received positive criticism about how to improve Accessibility with their websites but then feels the improvements about their websites are a little personal and will not alter their work because of 'creative differences'. They choose not to make reasonable adjustments to their websites because of this. This is a failing on the part of the developer disregarding the expertise of the Manual Testers, or Disabled People, whom they construct their websites for. With Website A, this is exactly what happened when one of the representatives from Forest Pathways informed them of their Accessibility failings and abruptly disregarded the conversation.

Whilst Forest Pathways are not prejudiced against the creative stylings of developers, the initial purpose of the internet was constructed as a way for universities to share knowledge globally. On this premise, we feel that knowledge should be accessible to all in line with the original purpose.

Case Study: Website B

Website B has 143 pages on their website. On each page there are roughly 4 errors detected by the rapid-analysis software. This software has detected contrasting issues, issues with titles, viewpoint errors and meta-tagging issues. 4 errors per page (572 errors) would, again, be presumed to be quite compliant in the grand scheme of things. The website's purposes are to inform, provide a service, generate leads and present information. This service is regarded as a critical service. The average Manual Testers score for this website, following conversion, was reported at 22.5 (more errors than accessible).

In the general assessment, the postcode of the business associated with the website could be found by all Manual Testers, but none could locate an Accessibility statement on the website. As this website is both providing information and selling a service, the questions were designed around this for the second half. The company provides smart meters which help people to monitor their energy usage and many of these smart meters have an Accessible application which automates the process of sending in your meter readings. However, for over half of the Manual Testers it was impossible for them to navigate the website easily to arrange an installation. Many of them reported that they would just use "freephone" to arrange a call which this report considers to be a 'work around'.

What was contradictory from the results is that the product page could not be located easily to arrange an installation.

However, the product could provide a solution to one of the accessibility concerns asked in a previous survey question. This circular inaccessibility thought process has been overlooked by developers and the people behind the creative design process. This is another common feature with companies that exclude Disabled People from the thought processes as they specifically design products and online services without the inclusion of Disabled People. Critics will argue '*well if there is a freephone option why would you need to use the website?*' and to those critics we offer the kind response that '*why build a website at all?*'

There were mixed opinions about the effectiveness of the 'Captcha' process, some found it inaccessible. The Manual Testers had little support to locate the 'audio' button and complete the Captcha process to submit forms. This issue is not limited to this website alone.

Other inaccessibility issues were concerned with alternative text for images picked up by the rapid-testing feature.

Manual Tester C reported that there was a clear resolution to this "By addressing issues such as clear navigation, functional forms/formats and accurate information, we can create a more inclusive online experience for everyone."

Case Study: Website C (Video included)

Website C has 428 pages on their website. On each page there is roughly 1 error detected by the rapid-analysis software. This software has detected contrasting issues, issues with titles, viewpoint errors and meta-tagging issues. 1 error per page (428 errors) would, for the final time, be presumed to be quite compliant in the grand scheme of things. The website's purposes are to inform, provide a service, connect people and present information. This service is regarded as a wellness service. The average Manual Testers score for this website, following conversion, was reported at 26.75 (heavily inaccessible).

Generally, three quarters of the manual testers could not find the post-code associated with the business connected to Website C. None of them could find an Accessibility statement and many of their images lacked alternative text.

All Manual Testers could not access reports associated with the organisation. There were no accessible documents available to review for their recent reports, publications or policies.

The website had complex issues that varied between Manual Testers. Whilst the website was online, it was reported as "incomplete" (Manual Tester D), while it was reported as "too clunky" (Manual Tester C) with little to no accessibility for a screen reader. Whilst some of the Manual Testers reported that "it works in most cases" (Manual Tester C) other testers reported that it needed to "improve its overall accessibility" and

there were clearly critical issues with the website, because at the time of testing, the website was flagging security issues.

Conclusions

The work has highlighted the insufficiencies of the current evaluation processes that do not provide thorough or ample analysis of overall accessibility, or 'interconnectedness', of a website. By precluding this approach to website Accessibility, developers will continue to complacently make errors that exclude Disabled People from digital spaces. We are sympathetic to designers who do make the effort to include rapid-analysis software to help highlight common WCAG 2.2 failings, however this report demonstrates with clarity why the tools that developers can use to measure inaccessibility is limited because Disabled People are not included in the design process.

Furthermore, we have succinctly justified the value of deliverables produced through the project in line with the standards laid out by the funding partner, Barnwood.

Accessibility Marker

As is discussed above, there are limitations in the current development process of websites. Which include the exclusion of Disabled People from participating in the creation process, the 'band aid' approach of modifying websites to be in line with the limited capacity of rapid-analysis software that detects errors which people then modify to make Accessible, and the reluctance on the part of business owners to engage with advocates or to acknowledge Disabled People's expertise when they provide it. As such, we have created an emblem that can be publicly displayed on websites to demonstrate that the

website passes the Forest Pathways FPAT process and have engaged with Disabled People to address failings.

This image was created by an artist from Gloucestershire and was reviewed by an Image Accessibility expert whose report can be found in Appendix 1. Below are two images. Below provides the description of both images.

Description: Images 1 and 2, are circular. On the circumference of the circle, it reads "Accessible Certified Issued by Forest Pathways"/ "Partially Accessible Issued by Forest Pathways", with a large yellow tick that flicks from the bottom centre, up to the right. On the top of both images are smiley faces, the certified image has a happy face. The partially certified face has a flat mouth, expressing its dissatisfaction. The centre of the image reads "A friendly website checked by real people in the real world" with some internal information including the Forest Pathways logo and the website number. This image is currently under scrutiny.

This report stresses the importance of the employment and expertise of the Manual Testers who were critical in addressing the Accessibility issues. Whilst these results can be used as

benchmark, further testing through the Manual Testing Team is required further.

Data Analytics Dashboard

The results of both tests were combined into a Dashboard which is available to the public on the website. A copy of the non-interactive version of this dashboard is available in the appendix. Please see Appendix 2

Lessons Learned

In 2017, the government under advisement from Mehmet Duran, performed similar research to what Forest Pathways have achieved here. The government found that "dirty testing" was an insufficient way to analyse website's accessibility. This is identical to our findings. Furthermore, we can add an additional element to our research to reflect the following findings as well.

The Forest of Dean is particularly vulnerable with regards to Accessibility as an important issue with many businesses not digitising their services. Meanwhile those that have digitised their services have failed to create an Accessible service available to Disabled People particularly those with sight related Disability.

There is a clear method of determining value regarding the work of Accessibility auditors provided through the compensatory damages US legislation and European legislation that naturally creates compliance with companies wishing to do business abroad and advertising their services abroad, or even being partner of a global brand.

Working with multiple organisations and projects in partnership has been an effective way to tackle problems in collaboration. This has been an important element in the partnership supporting those who are struggling.

Following a conversation on the 8th of May 2024 with FVAF, it was requested to highlight some of the challenges experienced during the project.

Within the team, promises of submission of deliverables were difficult to pinpoint. With one anonymous manual tester, they struggled to commit to deadlines and Henry and Guy had to employ different techniques to ensure that the manual tester would engage with the work.

The team were fast to respond with correct signposting for greater support including recommending a manual tester to therapy; which they are engaging with confidently now.

In exploring the ownership of 'disability' there was a consideration raised about why people disclose disabilities. Not every disabled person feels the need to disclose their disability because of the fear of 'becoming the subject' to peoples' understanding. Organisations connected to the project should take on board how they interact with Disabled people. The project looked to navigate round this by taking on information only concerned with the person's Assistive Technology. There was pushback from some manual testers about disclosing information related to this. In promoting freedom of choice, the project members used broad terms to reference disability without referencing medical terms as a suitable workaround.

The offer of alternative report submission forms (typically, it was written; but alternatives were also accepted through video, survey, word document) were provided to ensure reaching the deadline. The team respected every individual.

Presentation at Conference
On the 5th of April 2024, Guy and Henry Woodland presented their findings to "Stacks Summit 2024" in a one-hour presentation window, where there were over 100 global delegates in attendance. Guy and Henry opened the conference, in the keynote position, the first, discussing the importance of Accessibility Technology. The information they presented at this conference was effective at distributing awareness of Accessible design, because most delegates were Website Developers. As a global conference, these developers use Foundation6, which is regarded as the most advanced responsive front-end framework in the world (the code that powers websites).

The presentation was warmly received by the delegation and the host of the Summit, Joe Workman (Foundation6 Director) and Isiah Carew (Stacks Developer). Guy and Henry engaged directly with the audience answering questions through online Q+A setting over Teams, with many members of the audience stating, "this was an excellent presentation" and "good job" to name a few. Working with the Foundation6 team, Guy has

made numerous recommendations to improve the accessibility of their services, specifically their coding practices.

Reflecting on this outstanding accomplishment, it has provided a blueprint for Guy and Henry to replicate their work at conferences and talking specifically with developers who will create more accessible templates for websites across the world leading. It is here that realisable change (and the reduction of liability) can occur with their advocacy and data.

Following the conference, we engaged with online communities of approximately 2,500 specialist developers, in order to redistribute the recording of the conference. This has been warmly received, generating interest and discussion across forums. This resource continues to be accessed presently.

Legal Statement
This project was driven entirely by individuals who are Disabled People or people with mental health conditions. This project exists to improve Accessibility in the region of Gloucestershire.

All Manual Testers were compensated for their time at a wage of £25/form (just under £25 per hour). Reasonable adjustments were made to accommodate all Manual Testers during this project to ensure that they could engage with the Project and Access all Material required.

All work within is the property of Guy Woodland, Henry Woodland and George Woodland.

Appendices

Accompanying this document are a series of appendix that are required for submission.

Appendix 1 – Logo Analysis produced by Nathan Tree who evaluated the logo from an Accessibility perspective.

Appendix 2 – An example of the Digital Dashboard available online, and as a jpg printout here.

Appendix 3 – Branding documentation produced by Guy Woodland and Henry Woodland reviewed by Alex Digby.

Appendix 4 – Resource File, a series of informative resources whose value has been explained in this document.

Appendix 5 – Organisation Sizes to accompany the justification of the value of resources listed above.

Appendix 6 – Manual Testing Data Scores converted from OFFICIAL SENSITIVE rich qualitative data. The second sheet provides verification of the internal validity of the data through Cronbach's Alpha.

Appendix 7 – Barriers for Accessibility in the General Public in the Forest of Dean.

Appendix 8 – Priority list of Accessibility failings based on Organisation and Timeline