



State of the eNation Report

September 2004 – Premiership Clubs



State of the eNation Reports – a summary

The AbilityNet State of the eNation Reports are a quarterly review of a number of websites in a particular industry sector.

This report concerns the websites of the 20 football clubs in the Premiership. 21 sites were reviewed in all as Manchester United also has an alternative accessible site. The next report will review ten popular websites likely to be used by people for their Christmas shopping.

The idea of this report isn't to 'name and shame', but rather to highlight the current state of play – what level of access can the many millions of potential visitors who have a disability, dyslexia, or who simply can't use a mouse very well expect when visiting these sites?

Web Accessibility – why it's important

Today many services are only available, or offered at a discounted rate, on the Internet. If a website doesn't meet a base level of accessibility then it will be impossible for the large number of disabled visitors to use it. Many others with some sort of limiting condition will also have great difficulty.

It is illegal to bar disabled visitors from on-line services offered to the general public. No organisation would purposefully do this but many are either not aware of the problem, or don't know what to do to address it. In the UK there are estimated to be 1.6 million registered blind people, 1.5 million with cognitive difficulties, a further 3.4 million people who are otherwise IT disabled and 6 million that have dyslexia. The total spending power of this group is now estimated at £120 billion a year.

A Commitment to Accessibility

All the clubs reviewed were contacted a month before publication of this report and asked to make a public commitment to accessibility. To date the following have done this:

- Everton
- PremiumTV who host the sites of the ten clubs Aston Villa, Birmingham City, Blackburn Rovers, Bolton Wanderers, Crystal palace, Middlesborough, Newcastle United, Norwich City, Portsmouth, West Bromwich Albion

Please see Appendix B for the text of these statements.

Premiership Football Clubs – in summary

A 5 star scale was used: * = Very inaccessible
*** = Satisfies a base level of accessibility
***** = Very accessible.

21 sites were reviewed: 1 site had a ** ranking
20 sites had a * ranking

Website Audit – The findings

All sites were audited for accessibility and usability with the aid of the enterprise version of Watchfire's Bobby accessibility testing solution 'AccessibilityXM' and a range of manual checks.

PremiumTV hosted sites

These are Aston Villa (www.avfc.premiumtv.co.uk), Birmingham City (www.blues.premiumtv.co.uk), Blackburn Rovers (www.rovers.premiumtv.co.uk), Bolton Wanderers (www.bwfc.premiumtv.co.uk), Crystal palace (www.cpfc.premiumtv.co.uk), Middlesbrough (www.mfc.premiumtv.co.uk), Newcastle United (www.nufc.premiumtv.co.uk), Norwich City (www.canaries.premiumtv.co.uk), Portsmouth (www.pompeyfc.premiumtv.co.uk) and West Bromwich Albion (www.wba.premiumtv.co.uk)

Ranking: *

The 10 sites hosted by PremiumTV all use a similar template and are therefore similar in many ways. All, however, present significant accessibility barriers for many disabled visitors:

A clear font has been used on these sites (with the exception of Blackburn Rovers where text is a little small). The text can easily be made larger by the user – so vital for many visitors who have a vision impairment or who are viewing the site on a small screen (a laptop, for example). However headings and links on the left do not resize which will cause problems for many visitors.

Some sites (such as Blackburn Rovers, Crystal Palace, Middlesbrough and Norwich City) also have a watermark –which will make reading difficult for those with a vision impairment or dyslexia.

Often a text label appears when you put the mouse over an image. Blind visitors rely on the presence of text labels as a spoken description of the image. Without them the image is meaningless. Many of the images on these sites are unlabelled and others

poorly labelled. Several sites (such as Norwich City and West Bromwich Albion) have unlabelled or poorly labelled images for their main navigational links which makes it very difficult for a blind person or someone with dyslexia to find their way around a website – imagine trying to complete a journey where signposts at every roundabout have been left blank!

Every site includes a number of “in-line frames” (a way of sectioning the page) that include picture adverts that do not have text labels. Both in-line frames and unlabelled images cause problems for text-only browsers and speaking browsers used by blind visitors. These adverts also often include pictures of text. This means that, unlike with normal text, the user cannot resize it or change its colour.

These sites are very cluttered with the possible exceptions of Aston Villa, Middlesborough, Newcastle United, Norwich City and Portsmouth who use more white space to separate page elements.

Each site contains a large number of moving images, which can present difficulties for visitors with a vision impairment, cognitive or learning difficulty. Some of these are interactive presentation called a “Flash Movie’. Despite recent improvements in the accessibility of such page items, the vast majority of visitors who cannot use a mouse, are vision-impaired, or use speech output or voice recognition software will not be able to access this content.

The colours on the sites pertain to the clubs colours. On several sites (such as Bolton Wanderers) these colour combinations do not afford good contrast between text and background – causing problems for visitors with colour deficit conditions or a vision impairment.

Several features of these sites are reliant on those mini programs called JavaScript meaning that those using older browsers, those with vision impairments using some special browsers, and those whose organisations disable JavaScript for security reasons will not be able to use the sites fully. For example, with JavaScript disabled the shopping facility on several of the sites does not work fully (with the exceptions of Birmingham City, Bolton Wanderers and Norwich City).

Pop-up windows on many of these sites are also an added complication for blind visitors who may not appreciate they are not still looking at the main website.

A very lengthy registration process is required to see most of the content of these sites. This comprises three pages of questions on subjects including marital status, whether you own your home, own a car, subscribe to Sky Sports and gamble over the Internet. For many disabled visitors and visitors with a cognitive or literacy difficulty this process will be time-consuming, difficult and frustrating.

Arsenal – www.arsenal.com

Ranking: *

Arsenal's website has many of the most serious barriers to access for disabled visitors:

The text on this site is clear but quite small – with instances of very small text. Also the size of the text on every page has been "hard-coded" so that a user cannot easily make it larger – so vital for many visitors who have a vision impairment or who are viewing the site on a small screen. Images of text have also been used instead of actual text. This means that the user cannot resize it or change its colour.

A number of the images on this site are unlabelled and others very poorly labelled – this will cause difficulties for blind visitors or those using a text only browser.

The site also includes a number of moving images, which can present difficulties for visitors with a vision impairment, cognitive or learning difficulty. There is also a Flash movie, which can cause difficulties for visitors who cannot use a mouse, are vision-impaired, or use speech output or voice recognition software.

The main site uses 'frames' (sections of the page which may scroll independently one from another). Frames are not handled well by some speaking and text-only browsers, as well as creating difficulties when the visitor wants to print or bookmark the page. The shop site does not use frames.

Several functions on the site are reliant on those mini programs called JavaScript meaning that those using older browsers, those with vision impairments using some special browsers, and those whose organisations disable JavaScript for security reasons will not be able to use the site.

Charlton Athletic - www.cafc.co.uk

Ranking: *

Charlton Athletic's site has many serious issues with accessibility:

The site is less cluttered than most with text being clear and generally of a decent size (with the exception of the drop down links on the home page and the fixtures page). However, text does not easily resize with the user's preference – so vital for many with a vision impairment or dyslexia.

The scrolling text at the top of the page will be difficult for many with a vision impairment or literacy difficulty to read, and will be distracting for those with a cognitive impairment.

All images on the site have labels – although most include the redundant info "Image of..." or "This picture shows..." and on home page a few say 'main story image' or 'story image 2'.

The site includes a number of “in-line frames” which can cause problems for text-only browsers and speaking browsers used by blind visitors.

The entire site is reliant on those mini programs called JavaScript - without them it is impossible to use the main navigation and shopping facilities. Those using older browsers, those with vision impairments using some special browsers, and those whose organisations disable JavaScript for security reasons will not be able to use the site.

The site is also virtually impossible to navigate using a keyboard as the main navigation requires a mouse and there is no dotted line around links when tabbing.

Chelsea - www.chelseafc.com

Ranking: *

The text is generally clear (although there are some instances of small text) and does easily resize with the user’s preference. The navigation, however, is slightly confusing and may cause difficulties for visitors with a cognitive impairment.

Most images on the site have labels– although most are not well labelled. This will cause significant difficulties for blind and dyslexic visitors. Some pictures of text have been used instead of actual text. This means that the user cannot resize it or change its colour.

The site also includes a number of moving images, which can present difficulties for visitors with a vision impairment, cognitive or learning difficulty. There are also a number of Flash movies, which can cause difficulties for visitors who cannot use a mouse, are vision-impaired, or use speech output or voice recognition software.

The site includes a number of “in-line frames” which can cause problems for text-only browsers and speaking browsers used by blind visitors.

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported the site design changes significantly and it is very hard to use it. The Megastore also does not allow you to remove items from your basket.

Everton - www.evertonfc.com

Ranking: *

Everton’s site again has numerous issues with accessibility:

The home page is cluttered (and other pages slightly less so) with text that is clear but very small. The text size on every page has been "hard-coded" so that a user cannot easily make it larger – so vital for many visitors who have a vision impairment or dyslexia.

There are numerous unlabelled images on this site and others are poorly labelled. This will cause significant difficulties for blind and dyslexic visitors. The site also includes a number of moving images and scrolling text, which will present difficulties for visitors with a vision impairment, cognitive or learning difficulty.

This site also includes numerous Flash movies, which can cause difficulties for visitors who cannot use a mouse, are vision-impaired, or use speech output or voice recognition software.

The site also includes an "in-line frame" which can cause problems for text-only browsers and speaking browsers used by blind visitors.

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported a number of functions stop working – including the link to the megashop and the virtual tour.

The site does include a text only version, but this version does not entirely address many of the issues listed above. Abilitynet is very much of the opinion that main sites can and should be made accessible for all.

Fullham - www.fulhamfc.com

Ranking: *

This website would also present many disabled visitors with significant difficulties:

The site is relatively cluttered but text is generally clear and of a good size (with the exception of the links on the left and in the shop).

Although a clear font has been used the text size on every page has been "hard-coded" so that a user cannot easily make it larger – so vital for many visitors who have a vision impairment or dyslexia.

In adverts pictures of text have been used instead of actual text. This means that the user cannot resize it or change its colour. Instances of red on black text may also create difficulties for many visitors.

Numerous images on this site are unlabelled and others very poorly labelled – this will cause difficulties for blind visitors or those using a text only browser. The site also includes a number of moving images and scrolling text, which can present difficulties for visitors with a vision impairment, cognitive or learning difficulty.

There is also a Flash movie, which can cause difficulties for visitors who cannot use a mouse, are vision-impaired, or use speech output or voice recognition software.

Pop-up windows are also an added complication for blind visitors who may not appreciate they are not still looking at the main website.

On the whole the site is not reliant on those mini programs called JavaScript with the exception of the 'This Match, Next Match' tabs which do not function.

Liverpool - www.liverpoolfc.tv

Ranking: *

Liverpool's website claims to be the world's most popular football club website with over 1m visitors a month and yet contains significant barriers to access for it's disabled fans:

The home page is cluttered (and other pages slightly less so) with text that is clear but small (including main navigation links and story text).

The text size on every page has been "hard-coded" so that a user cannot easily make it larger – so vital for many visitors who have a vision impairment or dyslexia. The page also features a watermark behind the text, which will make reading difficult for these same groups.

Some pictures of text have been used instead of actual text. This means that the user cannot resize it or change its colour. The site also includes numerous unlabelled images whilst others are poorly labelled. This will cause significant difficulties for blind and dyslexic visitors.

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported a number of functions stop working – including the main navigation and shop functionality.

Manchester City - www.mcfc.co.uk

Ranking: *

This website also contains some important issues with accessibility:

The pages are well spaced out but text is small in places and very small in others. The text does easily resize with the user's preference with the exception of the links on the left and advert text.

There are numerous unlabelled images on this site and others are poorly labelled. This will cause significant difficulties for blind and dyslexic visitors. Some pictures of text

have been used instead of actual text. This means that the user cannot resize it or change its colour.

The site also includes a number of moving images, which can present difficulties for visitors with a vision impairment, cognitive or learning difficulty.

There are also a number of Flash movies on the site (six were found on the home page alone) which can cause difficulties for visitors who cannot use a mouse, are vision-impaired, or use speech output or voice recognition software.

The site includes a number of “in-line frames” which can cause problems for text-only browsers and speaking browsers used by blind visitors.

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported the site’s functionality is seriously impaired – the left navigation disappears. The shopping facility required registration and hence this feature was not tested.

The left navigation links are also not accessible to keyboard users who are not able to use a mouse.

Manchester United - www.manutd.com

Ranking: *

This site has serious accessibility issues:

Each page holds a lot of information but page elements are quite well spaced out. Text is often small and whereas some text resizes with the user’s preference many links and pictures of text do not – so vital for visitors with a vision impairment or dyslexia. The use of pictures of text instead of actual text means that the user cannot resize it or change its colour. Instances of yellow on red and grey on white text may also create difficulties for many visitors.

Many links are not accessible from the keyboard and hence will cause great difficulty for visitors who are blind or cannot use a mouse.

Whilst many images on this site are well labelled numerous other images are unlabelled– this will cause difficulties for blind visitors or those using a text only browser. The site also includes a number of moving images, which can present difficulties for visitors with a vision impairment, cognitive or learning difficulty.

There are also a number of Flash movies, which can cause difficulties for visitors who cannot use a mouse, are vision-impaired, or use speech output or voice recognition software.

Pop-up windows are also an added complication for blind visitors who may not appreciate they are not still looking at the main website.

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported the site's functionality is seriously impaired – the main navigation disappears and you cannot access large parts of the site. The search facility in the archive section also does not work.

Manchester United Accessible site – www.manutd.com/access

Ranking: **

Manchester United have created an accessible version of their website which has many well thought out features that will make access for a broad range of groups easy and enjoyable. It is not simply a text only version of the site but is flexible, contentful and appealing.

Unfortunately, however, many of its pages contain high priority accessibility issues and we are not able to give it a higher score.

The link to this site was situated at the very bottom of the main site home page and in very small text. Subsequent to our drawing this to their attention they have moved it to the top right corner and made it much larger. Whilst this is to be commended the link is, in our opinion, still unclear - a rather cryptic www.manutd.com/access. Hovering the mouse over it provides an explanatory label, but the lack of an underline will mean that many visitors will not appreciate that it is a link. We do not feel this is a sufficiently clear and accessible way of informing disabled visitors of this valuable facility and hence, although this more accessible version of their site is a commendable addition, it will not practically benefit the many disabled visitors who visit the main website.

Note: AbilityNet subscribes to the opinion that an organisation's main website can and should be accessible and usable to the broadest audience possible. Only where the issues of an existing website mean that achieving accessibility is infeasible is the introduction of an additional, accessible, site appropriate.

Southampton - www.saintsfc.co.uk

Ranking: *

This website also contains some important barriers that will cause difficulties for many visitors:

The pages are well spaced out but text is small in places and very small in others. The text does easily resize with the user's preference with the exception of advert text. The text of the links on the left overlap each other at larger font sizes.

There are numerous unlabelled images on this site and others are poorly labelled. This will cause significant difficulties for blind and dyslexic visitors. Some pictures of text have been used instead of actual text. This means that the user cannot resize it or change its colour.

The site also includes a number of moving images, which can present difficulties for visitors with a vision impairment, cognitive or learning difficulty.

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported the site's functionality is seriously impaired – the left navigation disappears and you cannot access the search facility. The shopping facility required registration and hence this feature was not tested.

The main navigation links are also not accessible to keyboard users who are not able to use a mouse.

Tottenham Hotspur - www.spurs.co.uk

Ranking: *

www.spurs.co.uk will also present difficulties to many visitors:

Again the page's contents are well spaced out on this site but there is a lot of content – the entire page can only be seen with a large screen resolution (1024x768). Lower resolutions will require horizontal scrolling.

In general the text size is adequate – although there are instances of smaller text, and link size was increased in a recent site refresh. However, unlike prior to this site refresh, the text size on every page has now been "hard-coded" so that a user cannot easily make it larger – so vital for many visitors who have a vision impairment or who are viewing the site on a small screen. Images of text have also been used instead of actual text. This means that the user cannot resize it or change its colour.

Some of the text on the site is of poor contrast, with instances of dark blue on mid blue and black on mid blue. This will make it difficult for visitors with a range of vision impairments to read the text.

There are numerous unlabelled images on this site and others are poorly labelled. This will cause significant difficulties for blind and dyslexic visitors. There are also unlabelled image links, which will make navigation difficult for these groups.

The site also includes a number of moving images, which can present difficulties for visitors with a vision impairment, cognitive or learning difficulty. There are also a number of Flash movies, which can cause difficulties for visitors who cannot use a mouse, are vision-impaired, or use speech output or voice recognition software.

The site includes a number of “in-line frames” which can cause problems for text-only browsers and speaking browsers used by blind visitors.

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported the top navigational links overlap and become difficult to read. The shopping facility required registration and hence this feature was not tested.

Appendix A - Further sources of Advice and Support

- www.abilitynet.org.uk

AbilityNet is able to offer information, advice and a range of services to help make a website accessible and usable for everyone – including accessibility audits, disabled end user testing, training, support, accessible web design and a Key Info Pack to get you started.

For further details please call Robin on 01926 312847 or email accessibility@abilitynet.org.uk

Other sources of help and information include:

- www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is the body at the forefront of the development of standards in good design on the world wide web (including accessibility). The W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) form the basis of all other standards.

- www.w3.org/WAI/wcag-curric

This link will take you to a subsite of the W3C website which tries to explain in plainer terms, with examples of good and bad code, the W3C guidelines checkpoint by checkpoint.

- www.e-envoy.gov.uk/Resources

The UK government Office of the e-Envoy has guidelines on web accessibility (based upon the W3C guidelines). These can be viewed on-line or downloaded as an illustrated Word document.

- www.drc.org.uk

Organisations are legally obliged to provide websites that are accessible to disabled people. This site includes information on the DDA, its accompanying code of practice and their recently published report outlining the findings of research into the accessibility and usability of 1000 websites.

Appendix B – Statements of Commitment to Accessibility

PremiumTV

"PTV attempts to make its web sites useable and engaging for the broadest possible range of Internet users. We constantly strive to support as many viewing technologies as we can including those utilized by users with special needs. We welcome any constructive feedback and will always act on it where it is feasible and compatible with our clients needs." - Andy Measham, Chief Operations Officer

Chelsea

"The recent re-design of www.chelseafc.com was undertaken with specific objectives in mind, not least of which was the issue of access for disabled users. We will continue to work alongside Ability Net to ensure a high standard of service to all our supporters who stay in touch with Chelsea via the internet" - Chris Tate, Managing Director, Chelsea Digital Media

Everton

"Everton Football Club through its official website evertonfc.com has continually made a conscious effort to provide access to our disabled visitors. We offer supporters with impaired vision a text-based service that the individual user can tweak to their own specification ie what colour they would like to view the content in and in what font size and average page views per month are currently approximately 10,000. We also provide plenty of audio-based material specifically concentrating on the premium content that is deemed to be the most popular on the site." - Mark Rowan, Communications Manager, Everton Football Club