ticketsolve

WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY

▶▶ **with Catherine Turner**

▶▶Introduction:
Keeping accessibility at the forefront

As our understanding and awareness of website accessibility become more informed, the area also becomes more complex. Keeping accessibility at the forefront of your team's agenda is easy thanks to accessibility technology specialist **Catherine Turner**, who also outlines the top considerations for arts and cultural organisations.

Catherine Turner is a trustee for **Colchester Arts Centre**, a technology accessibility advisor and an enthusiastic patron of many art forms. She's also a disabled person with a love of swimming and a hatred of bananas.

Catherine has been the lead consultant for Ticketsolve on a web accessibility project and has supported our system in achieving our goal of reaching the benchmarking required of **WCAG 2.1/ AA compliance**.

The purpose of this whitepaper is to look at a series of recommendations around how your organisation can open up the dialogue of web accessibility and **keep accessibility high on your agenda**.

▶▶Untangling the Knots:
The Meaning of Accessibility

The word 'accessible' can stir different feelings, emotions, and connotations amongst teams. In the arts, we speak a lot about 'access'. We see it in funding applications, mission statements and as topics and themes represented at conferences. For the purpose of this guide, we will focus on the term accessibility and website accessibility in particular.

Web accessibility can mean different things to different people. It might mean an easy-to-use website, or easy-to-find information through a variety of channels (website, app or call). It might even means easy to digest information or information that is reachable by users of assistive technology. The list of meanings can grow!

It's not always easy to understand, but in essence, we know that it usually requires assisted technology to provide an online customer experience. With this in mind, to better understand website accessibility, we borrow from the definition that website accessibility endeavours to ensure that **there are no barriers that prevent interaction with, or access to, websites on the World Wide Web by people with physical disabilities, situational disabilities, and socio-economic restrictions on bandwidth and speed**

There shouldn't be a conflict between the different meanings and connotations of accessibility within your organisation. The purpose of this Ticketsolve Guide is to comb through some of these knots that have become entangled in the term so that we can keep pushing forward with accessibility and create action for change and further improvements for our audience members.

▶▶ Getting Started:
Steps to be more accessible for all

Website accessibility has become more complicated as our awareness increases. We notice areas for improvement, content that requires our attention and other considerations around the customer journey that need to be addressed.

As well as our awareness developing, we also see that the tools people can use have multiplied, but they're not a total solution to what needs to be considered within your organisation. Tools might help with some areas of accessibility, but they can also cause problems. For smaller organisations with smaller budgets, they're not always feasible.

The purpose of this guide is to reinforce the great work that your organisation is doing and not to add additional pressure to your team. Website accessibility might take the approach of multiple small steps for your team.

Whatever way progress looks for your team, just remember that the steps you take today are shaping your progress for tomorrow. As we discuss throughout our entire guide, there's no final destination when it comes to web accessibility. **It should become embedded in your objectives and the culture of your organisation.**

Alt Text: Alternative Text for images

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Alt Text is short for 'Alternative Text'. Understanding the purpose of why alt text is an alternative form of communicating your message is essential to its effectiveness.

Images make an impact - they matter to the meaning of your communications. But how they make an impactful contribution to your messaging differs depending on where exactly they are in the customer journey.

When trying to devise the most effective alt text within your comms, ask yourself these questions:

How does this image contribute to the meaning of your messaging?

- Is it to provide images for the show?

- Is it acting as a CTA?

- Is it providing information that otherwise might be missed?

Have you considered any potential barriers that your image is creating?

- Does your customer know what the next steps in the journey are?

- Are there dates and other time sensitivities that customers need to be aware of to secure their tickets?

- Is there a cultural barrier to your image? Does it resonate with all customers the same way and if not, how will you cater your messaging around this?
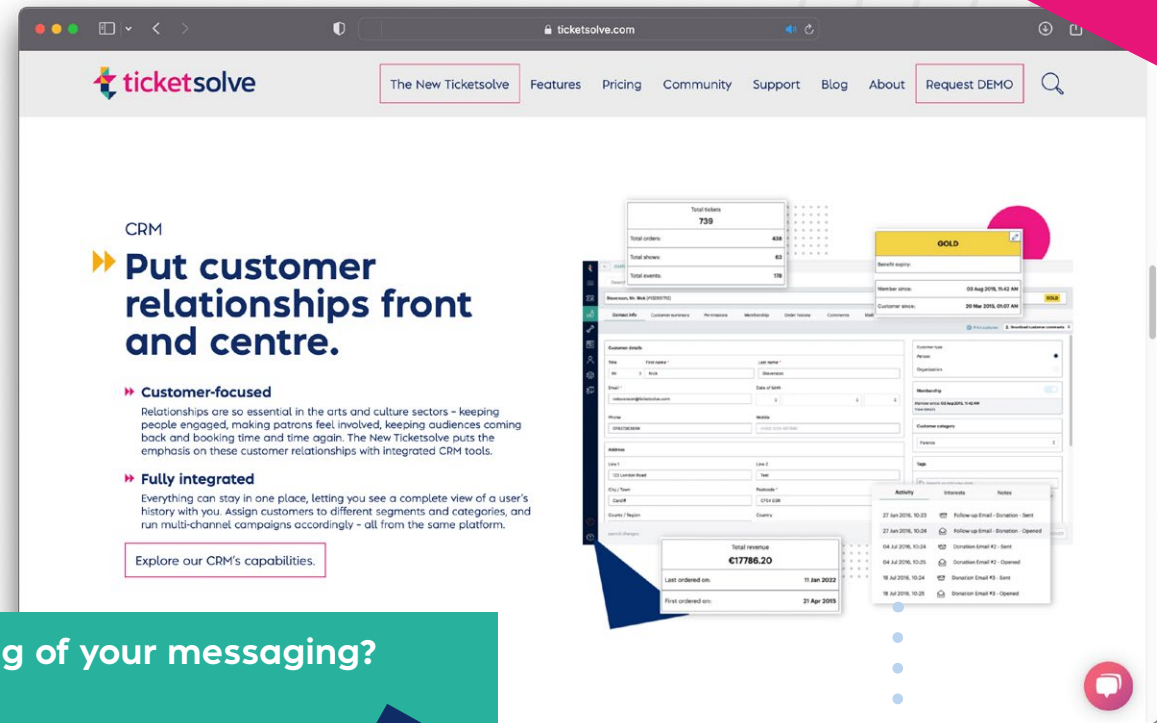
```
"https://www.ticketsolve.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Main-Features-CRM.png" alt="Screenshot of Ticketsolve's CMS showing revenue from tickets"> = $0
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Example of Alt text

2 Video Content: Pros and Cons

With the rise of video content, it's important to consider the pros and cons of using video content around accessibility.

Visual or Verbal?

If the video has purely visual content and doesn't have anybody speaking, that will be inaccessible and frustrating for people who can't see that content. And at the same time, if it only has verbal content, that will be inaccessible to people who can't hear it. So that's partly about thinking about using a mixture of visual content and people speaking.

Audio Description of BSL/ISL?

Depending on the context of what the video is for and what your budget is, it might not be feasible for your organisation to interpret and describe absolutely every video. If your budget allows, you could consider audio description and British sign language. You need to think about when and why you'll do that, where and how it'll be most impactful. You also need to think about how else you engage with those people who can't access the video due to other disabilities.

Some Suggestions:

- Keep it simple! A brief description of the video in a newsletter for example, could work well for people who are interested but can't watch the video.

- You also need to consider where the video is hosted and ensure that the platform/the player controls themselves are accessible. Vimeo and YouTube are two accessible platforms which Catherine highly recommends.

3 Human touch: Supporting customers

With more and more organisations moving towards digital tools such as bots and other clever automations, it's important to consider how and when the human touch might be essential for a person utilising assisted technology.

Initiating an Accessibility Promise and Pledge

Over a short period of time, there have been big changes to box office operations. With reduced box office hours and occasionally no direct box office phone line, it can be not only frustrating but highly demotivating for audience members who are eager to book tickets but are struggling with a specific step in the booking journey.

Introducing an accessibility promise highlights the commitment of your team to your audience members and allows you to implement practices that are solely dedicated to supporting customers with access requirements.

Some things to include in your accessibility pledge:

- **A dedicated & monitored accessibility enquiries email if you have no phone line**. Including an 'accessibility@organisationname.com' is a smart way to ensure that there is a direct link between your audiences and your team at all times.

- **Ticket holds & reserves.** If your organisation frequently has big onsales, you might consider implementing a small ticket hold process as a method of contingency planning around access. You can then release any tickets that are on hold after periods of busy traffic to your website and ensure that no audience misses out on booking a ticket because of their access requirements.

4 Understanding your requirements:
## Meeting AA standards

Did you know under Irish & UK law, all public entities must meet a AA standard? The topic of website accessibility has become and will remain high on the agenda for arts & cultural organisations.

AA provides a set of standards and guidelines to ensure the accessibility of your website.

These standards ensure that content is easily available and in a readable format, that the page is traversable by the use of a keyboard, that all images have alt text included, and that the web application supports larger size fonts and high percentage levels for zoom.

With this in mind, Ticketsolve has made an accessibility promise that developments around AA functionality will be at the core of our future releases. Our agile development processes are iterative process helping to ensure the AA functionality goals we implement will constantly be updated - and represent a finishing line.

Consulting with Catherine Turner, Ticketsolve has recently announced a series of new software developments that ensures all aspects of the customer booking journey through Ticketsolve are WCAG 2.1 (AA) compliant.
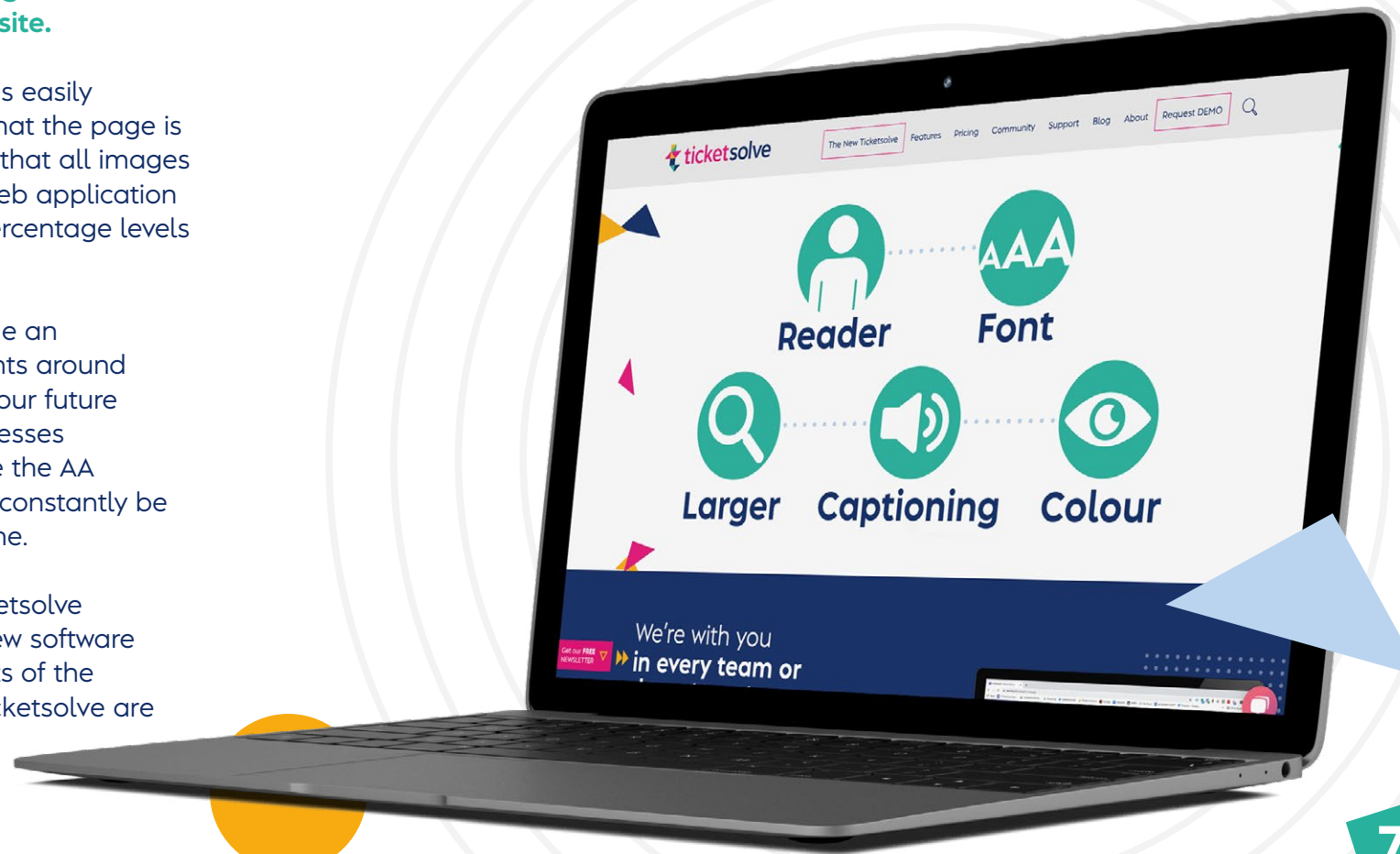
Conclusion:
Accesibility resources

Digital technology is one of the largest growing industries across the world; if we stop for a moment to even blink, we fall behind.

The pressure to stay current and on track is immense for arts teams, but we hope that the considerations we've listed in this guide will support you to ensure that your web content is constantly accelerating in terms of accessibility.

The Digital Divide is real and puts an immediate barrier between who can and is accessing your online content and your offerings. Building your understanding of website accessibility will open up further avenues that require your attention, and it will also **pave the way for broader inclusivity of your organisation.**

In supporting your next steps, Catherine and Ticketsolve have pulled together our favourite list of resources.

WebAIM - Web Accessibility In Mind
https://webaim.org

Introduction to web accessibility from Web Accessibility Initiative
https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/#examples

Making Audio and Video Media Accessible | Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) | W3C web content
https://www.w3.org/WAI/media/av/

Write Good Alt Text To Describe Images (Harvard University Digital Accessibility)
https://accessibility.huit.harvard.edu/describe-content-images

Colour Contrast Spectrum Tester, by Joseph C Dolson
https://www.joedolson.com/tools/color-contrast-tester.php

Color Safe - accessible web colour combinations
http://colorsafe.co

A Guide To Keyboard Accessibility: HTML and CSS (Part 1)
https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2022/11/guide-keyboard-accessibility-html-css-part1/

A Guide To Keyboard Accessibility: JavaScript (Part 2)
https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2022/11/guide-keyboard-accessibility-javascript-part2/

Click to view each resource
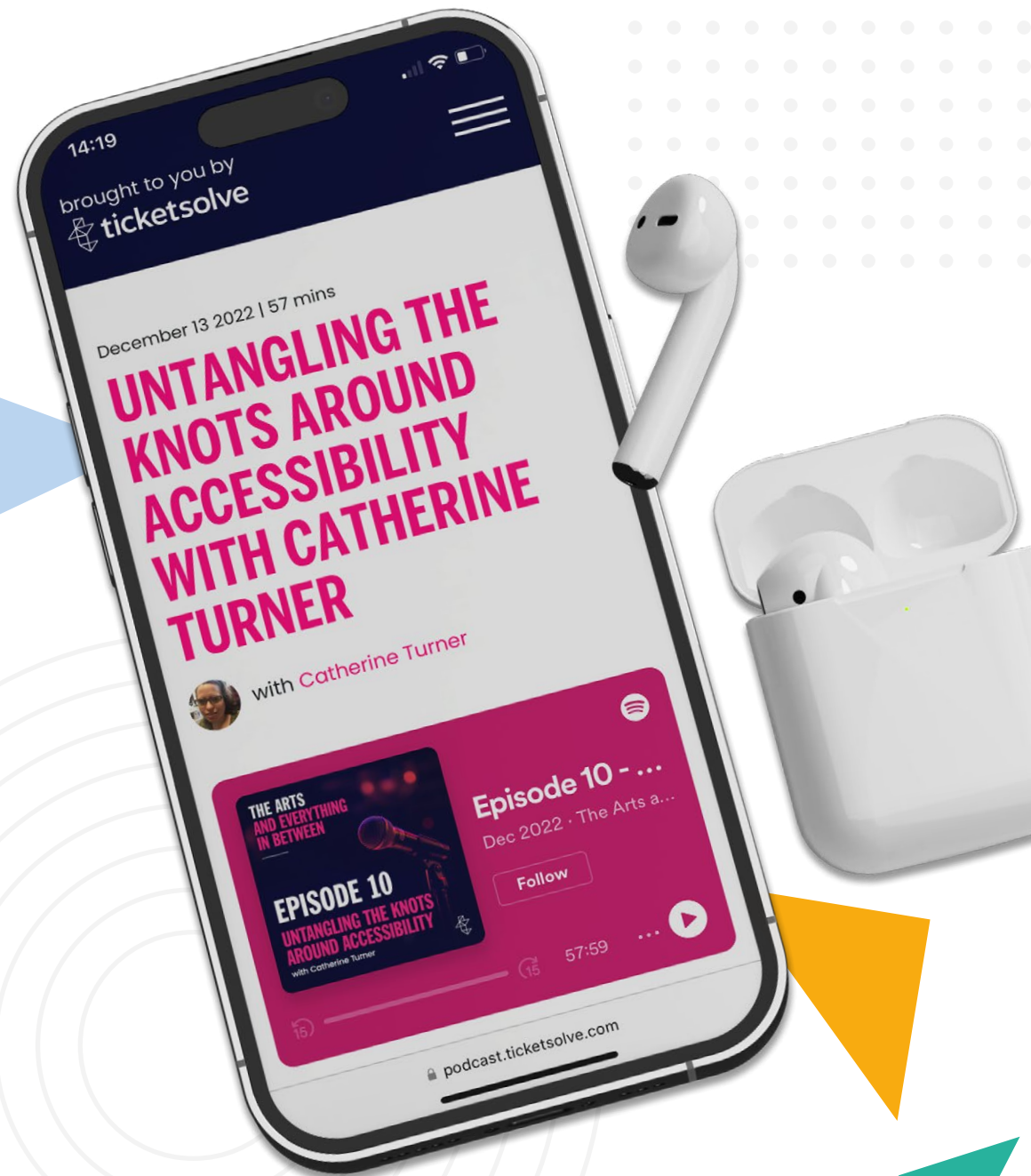
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▶▶ Final Reflection:
Continuingly improving

Thank you to Catherine Turner for her collaboration in devising this guide, sharing her experiences and for her guidance.

You can hear more about the accessible design project Catherine consulted on with Ticketsolve in an episode of **The Arts & Everything in Between Podcast.**

Ticketsolve has recently announced a series of new software developments that ensures all aspects of the customer booking journey through Ticketsolve are WCAG 2.1 (AA) compliant. These guidelines set us in the right direction forward for continued improvements to accessibility for all.

That means that we don't put a full stop after projects like this. We understand that web accessibility constantly changes and can become increasingly complicated as our awareness develops.

See more about our work on this project here.

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with Catherine Turner

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