



State of the eNation Report

May 2007 – Wembley Stadium Website

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 sector. This report departs from that theme - concentrating solely on the accessibility and usability of the website of the newly redeveloped national football stadium:

- www.wembleystadium.com

What level of access does this site offer for the many millions of football fans who have a disability, dyslexia, literacy difficulty, or who simply find it a little difficult using a mouse?

Web Accessibility – why it's important

Today many services are only available, or offered at a discounted rate, on the Internet. Other sites provide vital information. If a website doesn't meet a base level of accessibility then it will be impossible for a 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 and information 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

Wembley Stadium was contacted several weeks before publication of this report and invited to make a public commitment to accessibility.

"We continue to make every effort to make our website user friendly for all visitors accessing the website. We frequently invite feedback from professional bodies and individual users on the accessibility of our website and the results to date have been encouraging.

We are constantly looking at ways to improve and further develop our website and independent audits such as these are useful in highlighting areas which could still be improved. We pride ourselves on having one of the most accessible sporting and entertainment venues in the country and feel it is important that our website reflects this."

- Marie Head, Disability Liaison Coordinator for Wembley Stadium

The Results in Summary

A 5 star scale was used:

| | |
|-------|---|
| ***** | = Very accessible. |
| *** | = Satisfies a base level of accessibility |
| * | = Very inaccessible |

Ranking of Wembley site: **

For information on how we decide a site's ranking please see Appendix B.

The Results in Full

The site was audited in April 2007 for accessibility and usability using a wide range of in-depth manual checks. The testing process was assisted by an accessibility testing tool, the AIS toolbar and colour checking tools.

Wembley website - www.wembleystadium.com

Ranking: **

Whilst some efforts have been made to make this site accessible there are still several significant issues in a broad range of areas across the site which means many visitors will have difficulties using the site, or will be barred from using the site altogether. Most particularly impacted are blind and vision impaired visitors, hearing impaired visitors, and keyboard only users.

We concentrated on seven key areas when reviewing the site:

- General issues
- Finding out what major events are on at the stadium
- Searching for tickets and the purchasing process
- Finding out how to get to the stadium
- Applying for a Club Wembley ten year seat
- Taking a virtual tour of the stadium
- Finding out about the history of the stadium

General Issues

In addition to specific issues outlined in other sections below, this section comprises issues that apply to the site as a whole.

The pages on the site are relatively busy with numerous links - however elements are sufficiently separated by white space.

Text is small under normal viewing conditions (particularly that of the press box area) and this includes the main menu items - causing difficulties for visitors with a vision impairment or dyslexia. The site does, however, mostly use sans serif text.

Much of the text on this site cannot easily be resized by the user – so vital for many visitors who have a vision impairment or who are viewing the site on a small screen. Moreover that which can be resized either overlaps other text (e.g. on the home page the ‘Jobs@Wembley’ link overlaps the betting link below) or else half disappears (e.g. the ‘Take our tour’ link on the multimedia page). Moreover when text is resized the main left hand menu jumps down to the bottom of the page.

Images are also used for the main menu items, meaning that they are not easily resized by the user and which become pixelated and hence difficult to read when enlarged by special magnification software used by visitors with a visual impairment.

There are several instances of text and background colour combinations that do not afford sufficient contrast – making reading difficult for people with a vision impairment or dyslexia. These include the grey paragraph text and the white text of the sub-menu items.

Often a text label appears when you put the mouse over an image. Blind and dyslexic visitors rely on the presence of text labels as a spoken description of the image. Without them the image is meaningless. On this site almost every image, including most importantly images that are also links, are labelled. However many images have been given inappropriate labels – e.g. ‘Arch Lit’ for the Princess Diana concert, ‘Arial View of the Stadium’ for the FA Cup Final, ‘Stadium’ for the FA Carlsberg Trophy, ‘The Arch’ for the FA Carlsberg Vase, ‘Nationwide’ for the Nationwide Conference Final and ‘Football League’ for the Coca Cola Football League play offs.

Moreover the labels to numerous links on every page including the main menu items are all preceded with the word ‘Link’ (i.e. ‘Link to prices’) which means that a screen reader user who often pulls all links on a page into a list to quickly jump to a link by pressing its first letter cannot do so.

Moreover many images that do not require labels, such as spacer images and ‘eye-candy’, are also labelled which adds a lot of ‘auditory clutter’ for blind users (e.g. numerous images labelled ‘white bar’ and ‘*’ on the home page).

The Wembley website is reliant on mini programs embedded in the page called JavaScript. This reliance will cause difficulties for those using older browsers, those with vision impairments using some special browsers, and those whose organisations disable JavaScript for security reasons.

Many people are not able to use a mouse. Whilst most of the Wembley website is able to be used from the keyboard, critically the main menu is not keyboard accessible unless those mini programs called JavaScript are disabled (which then causes sub-menu items to disappear). Whilst you can use ‘access keys’ (typically the alt key plus a letter) to activate the menu items from the keyboard these access key combinations are not explained anywhere on the site and only visible if you hover the mouse over the link – which is of no use to keyboard users who require them! Lastly it is not easy to see which is the active link when tabbing through the main menu items with JavaScript disabled.

Some pages have a very small icon at the top with the adjacent text ‘Say It’ – this ReadSpeaker facility to read the entire page in synthetic speech is very poorly signposted. Moreover it often launches a new window without first informing the user which can be confusing for blind users and users with a cognitive impairment.

Whilst the ‘Access for All’ area of the site explains at length the facilities for disabled access to the stadium, it makes no reference to the accessibility issues or features of the website such as the access keys or ReadSpeaker functionality.

Finding out what’s on at the stadium

Whilst many visitors will have little difficulty investigating what events are coming up at the stadium, finding out event information is a daunting task for blind screen reader users due to the way the event information has been coded. For each event there are 5 associated links – almost all with different labels but all pointing to the same page. For instance to find out about the England v Brazil game on 1 June a screen reader user would hear the following:

“Link graphic Michael Owen link graphic go press enter for long description link England v Brazil dash Friday 1 June 2007 graphic star press enter for long description graphic star press enter for long description”

A screen reader user would assume that each differently labelled link took them to a different page. Moreover a link labelled ‘Michael Owen’ would be expected to link to a page specifically relating to the player – not a page more generally about the match of England v Brazil.

Whilst headings on the events pages are visually apparent to the visitor, no headings are coded in a way that informs a screen reader of their importance – this makes it very difficult for blind users to appreciate the structure of a page. Moreover page titles are uninformative or misleading – e.g. the main events page has the title ‘Welcome to Wembley Stadium’.

Searching for tickets and the purchasing process

Searching for tickets using the site’s search functionality will be problematic for many visitors. Whilst the search box on the homepage is nicely prominent it unfortunately relies upon JavaScript to function.

On other pages this prominent search facility is replaced by a link to a search page. The search box on this search page does not rely on JavaScript but, however, has not been properly coded to work well with screen readers and the blind user will often find his search term combined with text that is already in the search box and hence returning erroneous results.

Once the visitor has found the ticket information they require they are not able to purchase tickets online – they are referred to a telephone number. Thus visitors with a hearing impairment will find booking tickets extremely difficult as no email or minicom (text phone) alternatives are offered.

Applying for a Club Wembley ten year seat

To apply for a seat visitors must telephone as the ‘Send me’ link is broken. Thus visitors with a hearing impairment will not be able to apply.

Taking a virtual tour of the stadium

The virtual tour of the new stadium is a video offered to users with a number of different connection speeds. For those with a hearing impairment, however, there is no subtitled option provided and no transcript of the video. For blind users there is no audio description provided (explaining the visuals the video includes) and no alternative text summary.

Moreover the images that form the controls of the video are unlabelled making it difficult for blind users of screen reading software, and users of voice recognition software, to operate the player.

The video also launches in a new window without first informing the user.

Finding out about the history of the stadium

The interactive timeline facility in the ‘Glorious Past’ section of the site does not work when JavaScript is disabled. When it is functioning it launches in a new window without first informing the user.

The timeline uses an interactive technology called a “Flash Movie”. Despite recent improvements in the accessibility of such page items they remain largely inaccessible to a broad range of users. This timeline facility is not able to be used from the keyboard, or by users of screen reading or voice recognition software.

Moreover it scrolls a dateline extremely quickly. This movement will cause problems for those with difficulties using a mouse or with a vision or cognitive impairment. In fact the movement is so rapid that it may even induce a seizure in someone with epilepsy.

No more accessible alternative is provided.

Finding out how to get to the stadium

The site offers a useful range of information on how to get to the stadium. However vision impaired visitors will have difficulties accessing this information for the same reason outlined in a previous section. A screen reader announces the link:

“Link graphic Wembley Way link graphic go press enter for long description link getting to Wembley Stadium graphic star press enter for long description graphic star press enter for long description”

As in the events section, the pages of directions info include no properly coded headings making it difficult for a blind user to know the structure of the page and easily jump to a desired section.

An enlarged map and directions to the stadium have been provided. However this is provided as a PDF which has not been properly coded (or ‘tagged’) to make it accessible.

Appendix A - Further Sources of Advice and Support

- www.abilitynet.org.uk/web

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 range of useful resources.

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.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/e-government/resources/handbook/introduction.asp

The UK E-government Unit 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 – How We Decide the Ranking

The world standards in web accessibility (W3C WCAG) have prioritised their checkpoints into 3 priority levels. Compliance of your sites with these levels are phrased as - level 1 (highest) = “must”, level 2 = “should” and level 3 = “ought”.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) has meant that it has been law in the UK to have an accessible website since 1999. Arguably a site can only meet its legal requirement under the DDA if it is, at the very least, compliant with all level 1 checkpoints.

As it is only level 2 compliance which does not hinder some groups’ access (as defined by the W3C) it is our opinion that the true DDA requirement lies somewhere between levels 1 and 2 compliance.

This said, it has been our experience that many sites that meet level 1 and even level 2 priority checkpoints can nevertheless still present significant difficulties for disabled visitors in practice.

This can be due to a number of reasons. For example, over-reliance on purely visual clues to guide the user (leaving blind users without vital clues about where the designer intends the user’s ‘eye’ to be drawn), small or closely clustered links or buttons (causing those with fine motor control difficulties to miss what they intended to click on - or click on the wrong thing), lack of proper separation of page objects (meaning that users with vision or cognitive difficulties can miss important items which are not sufficiently separated from neighbouring content), the sheer bulk and complexity of links and sections on a page (making those who’s access technology or methodology is slow become frustrated or give up) or a host of other reasons.

Similarly a site that falls short of priority 1 or 2 compliance in a number of respects can nevertheless be very accessible and usable by the vast majority of disabled visitors in practice.

This can be due to the fact that particular checkpoints are only contravened very rarely (still denying the site level 1 compliance but having very little impact on a disabled users overall experience of the site), or because checkpoints that are contravened more widely only impact upon a very small number of users.

Thus we have tried to reflect the overall user experience of a site when deciding its ranking.

***** Ranking**

We have chosen our *** (“satisfies a base level of accessibility”) ranking as compliance (or near compliance where the shortfall has little evident impact on users) with priority level 1 checkpoints.

Further than that we look for significant (in our opinion based upon broad experience of working with disabled users) priority level 2 issues - such as the scalability of text, the avoidance of frames and any positive steps a site has taken to benefit visitors with an impairment (such as accessibility info or offering a choice of colour/text size schemes).

Note - It is our opinion that the addition of a Text only parallel site to the exclusion of addressing the accessibility/usability issues of the main site is neither necessary or in the spirit of inclusion or the W3C WCAG standards.

*** and ** Rankings**

We award * and ** to a site dependant upon how much it falls short of our definition of *** ranking.

****** and ***** Rankings**

We award **** and ***** to a site dependant upon how much it exceeds our definition of *** ranking.

For any further clarification please contact accessibility@abilitynet.org.uk