Online accessibility in action through Paralympic



School children exploring the National Paralympic Heritage Trust's Global Virtual Museum. Credit: National Paralympic Heritage Trust.

Learn how you can put our updated digital accessibility guidance into practice in your heritage project.

Almost half of the projects we've funded since April 2024 are creating or improving digital access to heritage. Making sure the online resources we fund are accessible to people with disabilities – who are one in four of the population – is a condition of our grants.

Explore how two organisations we've funded are embedding accessibility and co-creation with disabled people throughout their projects.

The Secret Garden at St Fagans: sharing heritage in ways everyone can understand

Innovate Trust are working in partnership with St Fagans National Museum of History in Cardiff to involve 80 people with learning disabilities to replant and research a forgotten cottage garden at the museum. Participants have made friends and developed confidence and autonomy in a safe and welcoming environment. They've also helped develop online resources like digital trails and videos explaining the history and gardening work at the cottage. They're sharing

what they've learned for others with learning disabilities who may visit the museum in the future, or who can't make the trip in person.

Lucy Curtis, Skills and Wellbeing Project Manager at Innovate Trust, says: "Many individuals face barriers to accessing their community. Digital participation can bridge this gap, making heritage activities more accessible to a wider audience."

Information on the Secret Garden webpage is written in plain language, headings guide users to different topics and the page i have alt (alt people



At the Secret Garden project's history sessions, people with learning disabilities have created a digital trail through researching the area that is now St Fagans Museum. Credit: Innovate Trust.

The Global Virtual Museum: lowering barriers to access museum spaces

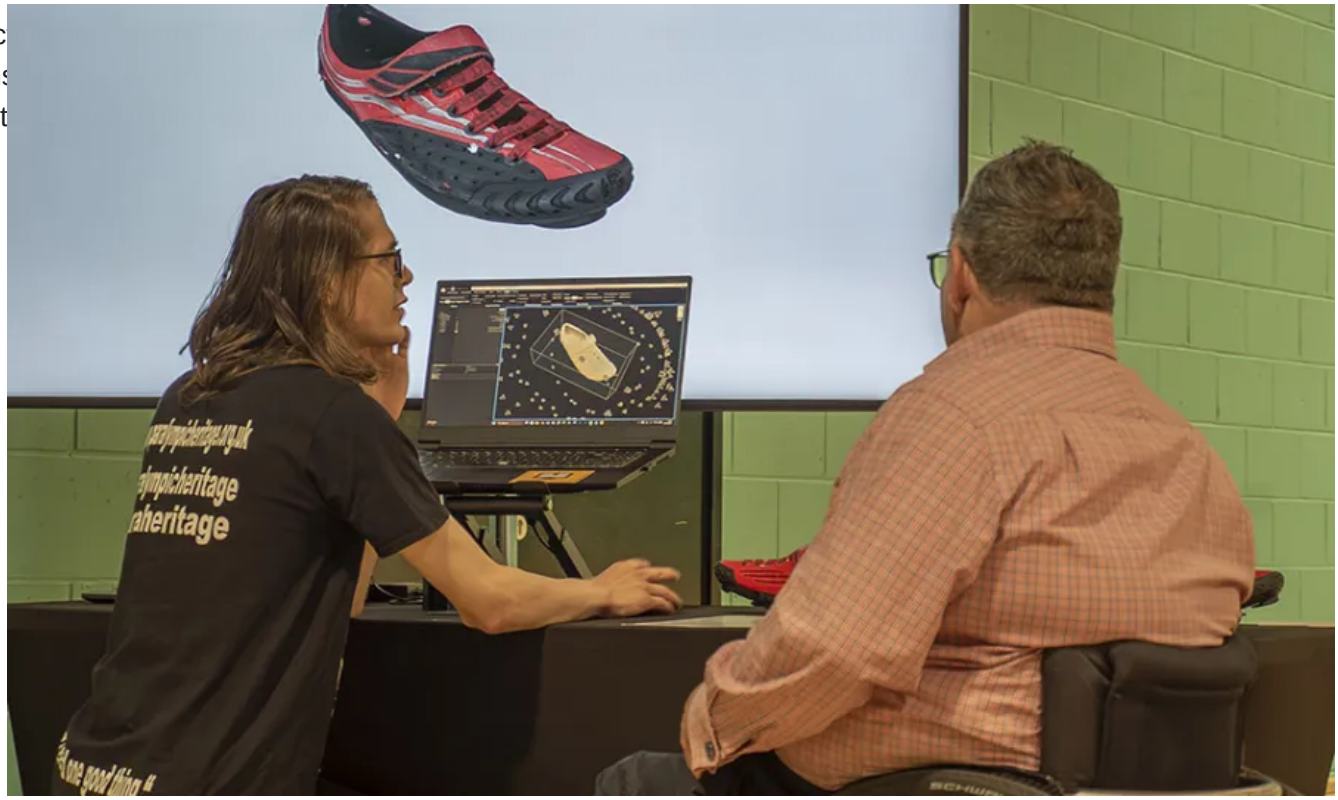
The National Paralympic Heritage Trust has created a Global Virtual Museum, researched and co-curated with people who have lived experience of disability. The digital galleries use 3D models, text, images, videos and trails to tell stories of Paralympic history. Disability sports organisations have contributed objects and histories representing athletes and communities with lived experience of cerebral palsy, dwarfism, blindness or partial blindness, and galleries also explore place-based Paralympic stories of communities from Hampshire to Japan.

This virtual museum is part of the wider Becoming Seamlessly Inclusive project, which aims to widen participation in Paralympic heritage.

Vicky Hope-Walker, CEO of the National Paralympic Heritage Trust, says: “Inclusive collaboration with a diverse workforce and people with lived experience of disability to create meaningful content has been as important as the digital design for accessibility.”

Accessibility features of the virtual museum include audio descriptions, guided tours and screen-readable resources. The site’s accessibility statement sets people’s expectations of how well the site meets their access needs.

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A trainee demonstrates the 3D scanning process for objects for the Global Virtual Museum. Credit: National Paralympic Heritage Trust.

Tips from the experts

Simon Jones from Studio 24, the specialist digital accessibility agency that updated our good practice guidance, says: “Accessibility is not about perfection. Small changes add up to a more positive experience for many people.

“And making a website accessible helps everyone – it makes it easier to use and accessible content is better indexed by search engines.”

Simon’s five top tips for addressing the most common web accessibility issues – which you can learn more about in our guidance – are:

- make sure **text can be clearly read** against the background
- **use alt text** to describe images to those who can’t see them

- write **descriptive hyperlink text** telling people where they're being taken – no more 'click here'
- use informative headings and **correct heading styles** to help screen reader users, search engine crawlers and people skim-reading
- make sure your website can be **navigated by keyboard** (like pressing tab to move through the page) for users who don't use a mouse

Put accessible digital practice into action

Innovate Trust and the National Paralympic Heritage Trust's accessible websites show how the principles of our digital accessibility requirements can be applied in a real-life project.

Josie Fraser, Head of Digital Policy at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, says: "These two impactful projects have broadened their audiences by creating inclusive experiences both in person and online. Designing with accessibility standards in mind from the start, and involving people with disabilities in creating and testing digital resources, has been crucial to their success."

Read our updated introduction to accessibility good practice guidance for practical advice on how to design, create and test accessible digital materials.



The museum worked with charities and the community to adopt NaviLens technology. Credit: Flick Baker.



museum-goers with vision impairment

The Disabled People’s Archive is preserving moments of protest and community. Credit: The Disabled People's Archive, Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People.



g disabled people’s heritage

The new spaces have been designed with visitors of all ages and needs in mind. Photo: Jason Lock.

Putting inclusion, access and participation at the heart of the National Science and Media Museum