

# UX Audit

Why it's valuable, the business benefits and ensuring customers keep coming back

*Estimated reading time: 12 mins*



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# Who we are

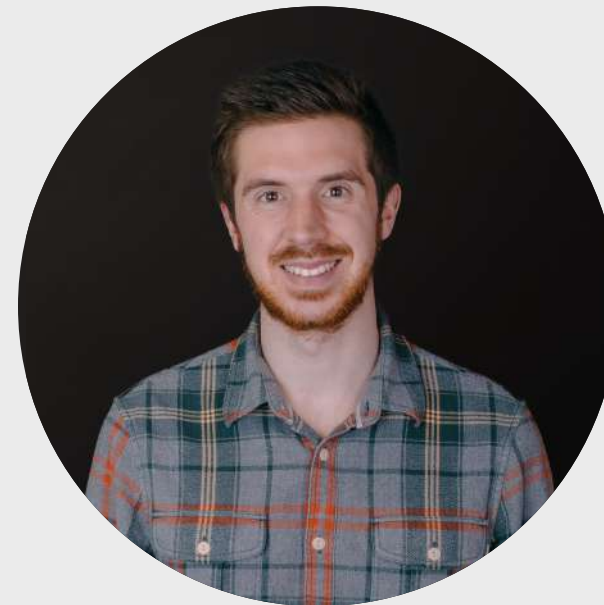


01

## Best in class user experience and circular economy consulting

Circular UX is a leading digital design studio, blending user-centred service design with a passion for how digital can be an enabler for organisations to rethink their business models and digital strategy shifting toward circularity.

Founded solely by Rob Armes and set up to provide consulting services.



# What is a UX audit?



02

## They have the following

A design review that uses a usability-inspection process in which (typically) one reviewer examines a design to identify usability problems, carefully evaluating from a user's perspective.

The end to end evaluation of the experience your customers receive when they interact with your business.

Looking to identify usability issues and problem areas that cause gaps in design continuity, create pain points for users and reduce conversion rate.

If an agency conducts a UX design audit, you will typically expect:

- A detailed audit report
- Discussion with a specialist of the evaluation results
- Obtain a list of recommended changes



## UX Audit

**A design review that uses a usability–inspection process to identify usability problems, carefully evaluating from a user's perspective.**

# The business value of a UX audit



03

## The trump card for business leaders

Why should a business leader invest in the cost of having an audit conducted?

Users always look for the easiest route, if the option you offer has complexity or unnecessary difficulty users will exit and go elsewhere.

***When surveyed 76% of respondents will switch to a competitor if they have just one bad experience\****

A satisfied user means they are able to complete specific goals or actions, be that making a purchase, completing an application or signing up for a monthly subscription.

\*State of UX in the Enterprise 2019, Userzoom.



## Get a fresh perspective

Another approach a business leader might take is using an in-house design team rather than an external agency or consultancy; although potentially lower in cost it will take considerable time and resources.

Reviews always work best when done by someone not involved in creating the design.

Similarly, the reason people are bad at proofreading their own writing is the mind plays tricks into only seeing what was intended to be written, not what is actually in front of them!

A fresh perspective will likely give unbiased and better feedback:

- An outsider is not emotionally invested in the design
- Is oblivious to any internal team politics
- Easily spot glaring issues that may stay hidden from someone who's been staring at the same design for too long





# Why is it so powerful?

## UX Audit

Circular UX were fantastic to work with who helped us solve problems with a key user journey.



The outputs provided were really comprehensive and well put together.



We received a fantastic piece of analysis that helped us break the complex problem space into easy-to-solve recommendations.



Helping us understand a critical user journey that we knew was causing us problems but we had no idea how to tackle it.



Engaging Circular UX to audit our platform proved immensely valuable for us, bringing fresh perspective and objectivity to the journeys.



Design is so often subjective, so having someone who can come in and say technically what's right and what's wrong and how to improve is a real asset.



UX audits have allowed the team to take a step back from the low-level detail and think about the strengths and weaknesses of their product design in a more holistic way.



Insights were instrumental in ensuring a seamless and user-friendly experience, putting the needs of our users at the forefront.





# When should you do a UX audit?

04



## A health check for your digital service

The longer you wait to conduct a review, the greater chance for undiscovered issues to be lurking and causing users frustration.

However, because an expert's time is quite precious (and potentially expensive), many organisations consider a review before the launch of a new product or major redesign to identify significant strengths and weaknesses of the current live design.

Think of a design review in a UX audit format like a health check which can be done at various stages in the design life cycle such as:

- Launch or redesign – launching a new product or redesigning an existing one
- Underperformance – a product or site performance is worse than desired
- Regular Checkup and ongoing feature release – part of regular maintenance, it's good practice to schedule periodic audits (2–5 years outside of the main design lifecycle)

# Expected outputs and outcomes



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## What do they look like?

There is no universal format for the UX audit report since its size and structure depend on the specific situation and work complexity. A combination of some slides, presentation and discussion is typically expected.

### Outputs

- Presentation deck summarising key findings
- Heuristic evaluation across shared elements
- Heuristic evaluations for each main individual element of the journey
- Accessibility evaluation with key concerns highlighted
- Discussion of the results with a specialist

### Outcomes

- Aware of the pain points affecting your users and potential reasons for dropout areas
- A suggestion of how to fix each individual issue identified
- Resolve usability issues in a priority order
- The overall set of recommendations and next steps

This explanation brochure includes samples and case studies of UX audits.



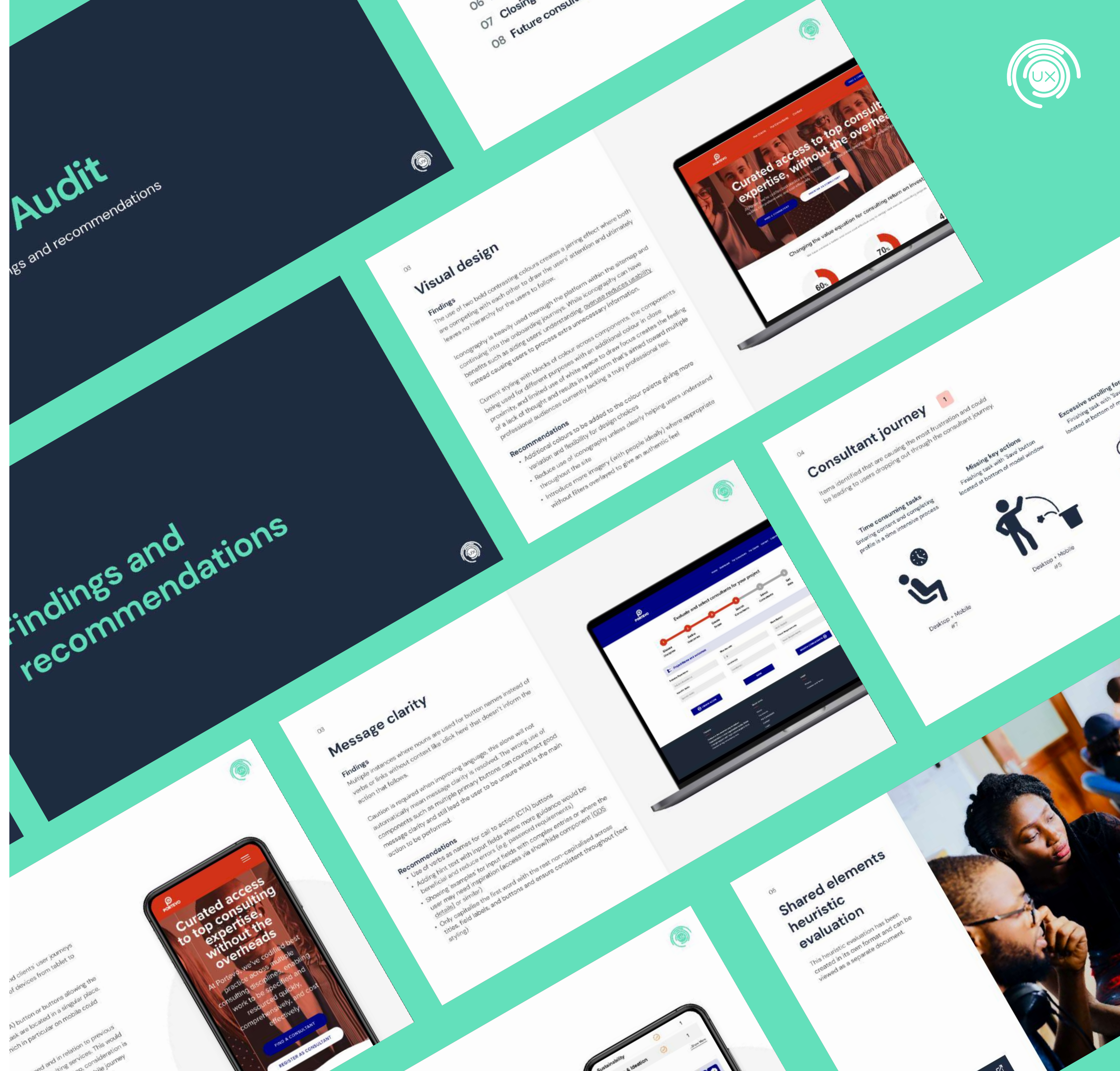
# Presentation deck

The presentation deck will be a stand-alone document that will cover key aspects and findings from the UX audit in a PDF format as an output.

With all evaluations summarised and presented in a deck, it will give you the best opportunity to digest and take a holistic view of the entire service that's been reviewed.

The key attribute is the document you receive can exist independently once handed over, being accompanied by a verbal presentation when discussing the final recommendations will give great context.

Ultimately it needs to be a robust and detailed enough piece of work that it can be picked up and consumed by anyone.





# Heuristic evaluation

The heuristic evaluation follows a custom template for consistency and ease. Clearly highlighting the most critical usability problems with a severity score that comes in a PDF format as an output.

The template has been built with Figma's powerful 'auto-layout' feature. The black and white checkered boxes are placeholders for screenshots of the interface. It is helpful to show the problems being described.

When evaluating many sections or pages of a digital service – or many steps in a linear process – it is often easier to complete multiple templates, one for each section or step in the user journey meaning you may receive several separate files.

The sample shows a completed heuristic evaluation with usability problems of varying severity scoring with critical issues that may be causing user dropout or other significant pain points labelled. It also highlights positive usability interactions spotted so you know what is working well and should keep.

**CLIENT LOGO** Heuristic Evaluation

Back to [audit playback deck](#)

Heuristic evaluation (Nielsen and Molich, 1990; Nielsen 1994) is a usability engineering method for finding the usability problems in a user interface design so that they can be attended to as part of an iterative design process. Heuristic evaluation involves having a small set of evaluators examine the interface and judge its compliance with recognized usability principles (the "heuristics").

Evaluator 01: [name]  
 Device / Browser / OS: e.g. PC / Chrome 88 / Windows 10  
 Site URL: [link]  
 Date: Month-Year

**Legend:**

- 0 No violations found
- 1 Critical usability problems: product cannot release until fixed
- 2 Major usability problems: fixing issues is high priority
- 3 Minor usability problems: fixing issues is low/med priority
- 4 Cosmetic problems only: fix issues if time is available

HEURISTICS	VIOLATION	RECOMMENDATION	SEVERITY
<b>1. Visibility of system status</b> Designs should keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate, timely feedback.	Description of the violation	Recommendation	3
	Description of the violation	Recommendation	2
<b>2. Match between system and the real world</b> The design should speak the users' language. Use words, phrases, and concepts familiar to the user, rather than internal jargon.	Description of the violation	Recommendation	1
<b>3. User control and freedom</b> Users often perform actions by mistake. They need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state.	Description of the violation	Recommendation	4

Retail x Banking x Health, Wellness & Fitness x Government Administration x  
 Computer Software x Financial Services x

You cannot select more than 5 elements

- Limited hint text with message the task at hand and process has been completed
- Models within models
- Include a confirmation page or success message / banner
- Include information explaining next steps with timescales to manage users expectations

2

You are requesting a verification from Sean Gabriel

Disciplines

Consulting Skills

Consulting Website

Recommendations

Case Studies

Verify

Verification Request Sent

OK

REQUEST

Use of 'X' to remove tag gives user ability to rectify item added in error

No change required

0

**Disciplines**

Customer Experience x Innovation & Ideation x Sustainability x

**4. Consistency and standards**  
Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. Follow platform conventions.

A section with no available options when selected is a waste of user effort

If nothing can be selected don't show section

3

**Recommendations**

No options

**5. Error prevention**  
Good error messages are important, but the best designs prevent problems from occurring in the first place.

Reuse of same icon from profile section and without clear understanding of the next task after adding a verifier users may miss adding items to be verified (potential drop out)

Better signposting of required tasks / next steps

Replace with 'Add experience and verify' action button

1

Sean Gabriel Former Manager sean.gabriel@red-badger.com

Get Verified

**6. Recognition rather than recall**  
Minimize the user's memory load by making elements, actions, and options visible. Avoid making users remember information.

Having tooltip to understand action about to be performed reduces instant recognition

Replace with 'Get verified' action button

Consider rewording call to action (CTA) for better context: 'Start verification'

2





# Our method

06



## They have the following characteristics...

1. Understand business objectives
2. Define the number of platforms and user journeys
3. Analyse data (if provided)
4. Perform heuristic usability evaluation
5. Perform accessibility evaluation
6. Compile findings and recommend improvements

Similar to the outputs and outcomes, there is no universal approach in the industry for a UX audit. With a deep knowledge of usability best practices the above is the recommended core components to be included.

You can read and share the method as a blog post [UX Audit 101: Step by step guide for conducting a UX review with template and tips](#)

# Huristic evaluation checklist

The heuristic evaluation is the key aspect of the UX audit, taking the largest proportion of effort and follows world leading [Nielsen Norman Group's](#) existing well established set of heuristics to base this process around specific criteria. The heuristics for user interface design developed by Jacob Nielsen are well known throughout the industry.

Heuristic evaluations that have shared elements across different journey types, such as sign up can be combined. Then for individual elements of different journeys heuristic evaluation will be required for each main step taken by the user.

As well as identifying usability issues and mapping them against heuristics, a checklist is used to ensure each individual usability error recognised has sufficient details around it. So when your audit is presented anyone can understand the context without additional explanation in person required.

Items included in the heuristic checklist:

- Issue description – A one-liner explanation of the issue
- Source location – Where the issue exists
- Usability heuristic – Map it against the usability heuristic it's not meeting
- Issue recommendation – A suggestion on how to fix the issue
- Accessibility – Say if it's creating an accessibility issue
- Priority – An overall priority score indicating the severity of the issue (Low, medium, high)





# 10 Usability heuristics for user interface design

Jakob Nielsen's 10 general principles for interaction design. They are called "heuristics" because they are broad rules of thumb and not specific usability guidelines.

## #1 Visibility of system status

The design should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within a reasonable amount of time.

## #2 Match between system and the real world

The design should speak the users' language. Use words, phrases, and concepts familiar to the user, rather than internal jargon. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.

## #3 User control and freedom

Users often perform actions by mistake. They need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted action without having to go through an extended process.

## #4 Consistency and standards

Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. Follow platform and industry conventions.

## #5 Error prevention

Good error messages are important, but the best designs carefully prevent problems from occurring in the first place. Either eliminate error-prone conditions, or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action.

## #6 Recognition rather than recall

Minimize the user's memory load by making elements, actions and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the interface to another. Information required to use the design (e.g. field labels or menu items) should be visible or easily retrievable when needed.

## #7 Flexibility and efficiency of use

Shortcuts — hidden from novice users — may speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the design can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.

## #8 Aesthetic and minimalist design

Interfaces should not contain information that is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in an interface competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.

## #9 Help users recognize, diagnose and recover from errors

Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no error codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.

## #10 Help and documentation

It's best if the system doesn't need any additional explanation. However, it may be necessary to provide documentation to help users understand how to complete their tasks.



# Digital accessibility

Digital accessibility refers to how usable a website, app or digital experience is by all users, regardless of their ability or disability.

At least 1 in 5 people in the UK have a long term illness, impairment or disability. Many more have a temporary disability.

In 2016, the UK had 6.1 million people with impairments that affect the way they use the internet with an online spending power of £16.5 billion. Given that 80 per cent of customers with impairments spend their money where they have the easiest journey, it's important to view digital accessibility as an opportunity, not a burden.

Accessible websites usually work better for everyone. They are often faster, easier to use and appear higher in search engine rankings.

Open-source tools used to test accessibility:

- [Google Lighthouse](#)
- [A11y - Color Contrast Checker](#)
- [Adee Accessibility Colourblind Simulator](#)





# How much does it cost?



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## Getting started

The cost of a UX audit depends on the complexity of the work, the defined scope and who you decide to perform the audit (an in-house team, an individual freelancer or an agency) and finally the duration of the audit.

All the following elements will give you a wide range of prices from £1,000 - £10,000+. Due to the scale and size of an audit, we have created differing levels being light, detailed and complex.

You can find out more information about UX audit pricing with the details following, however the best way to confirm which level of audit you require is by booking a free consultation to kick start the discussion and scoping with Circular UX.

# A range of audit options

UX audits come in a variety of sizes which is why we have a range to suit your needs.  
For the latest pricing please visit [Circular UX](#).

## Light

from £1,500 excl VAT

2 days



Single journey, user type, platform

Accessibility evaluation

Heuristic evaluations

Competitive review

## Detailed

from £3500 excl VAT

5 days



Single or multi journey, user type, platform

Accessibility evaluation

Heuristic evaluations

Competitive review

## Complex

from £7,500 excl VAT

10 days +



Multi journey, user type, platform

Accessibility evaluation

Heuristic evaluations

Competitive review





Case study

# Platform for Football

The Football Association (The FA)





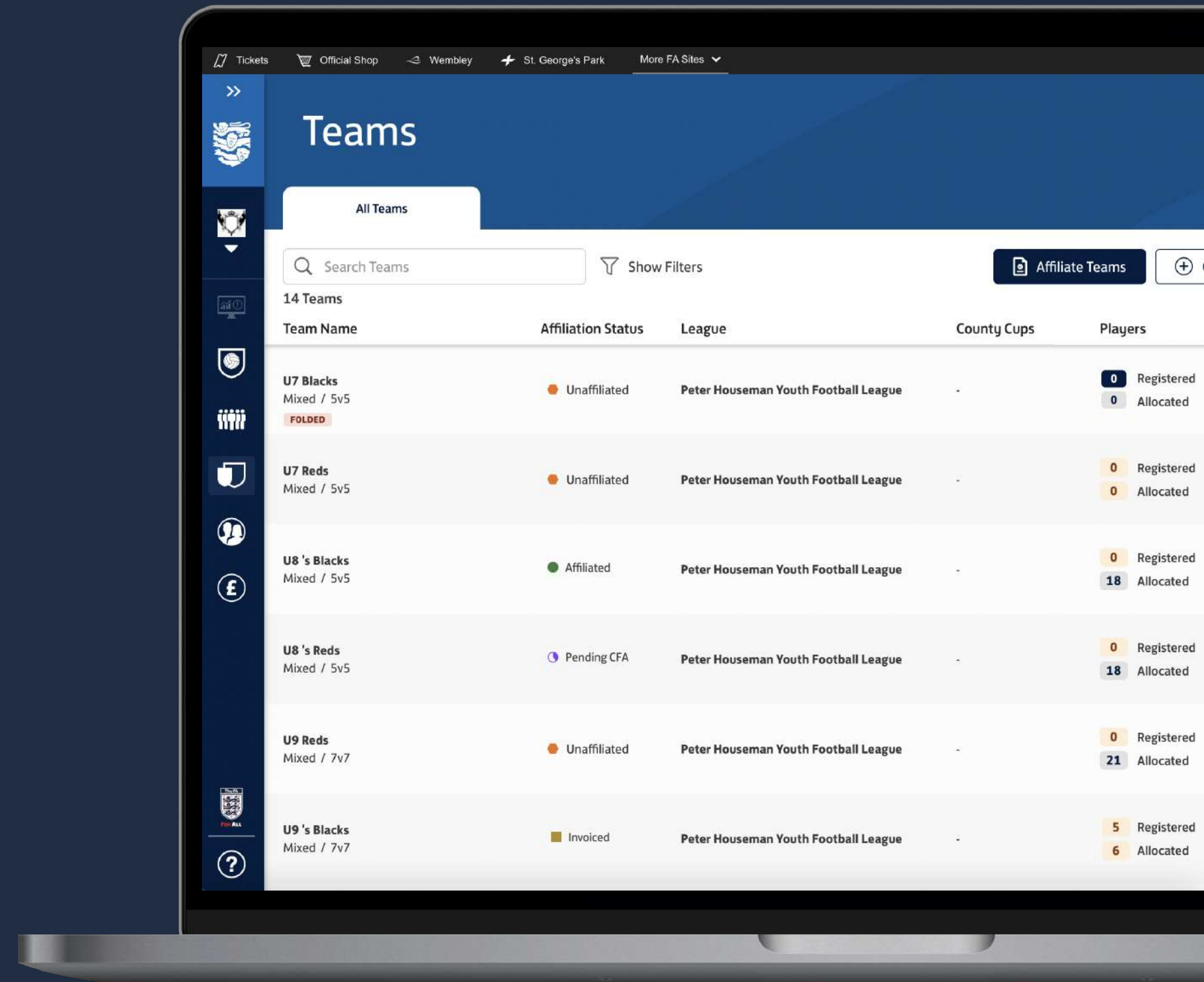
# Pinpointing design debt causing confusion in journeys and giving design direction

The Football Association (Abbreviated to The FA) – is the governing body of association football in England and the Crown Dependencies.

Replacing legacy systems that handle the administration of all grassroots football, they needed design leadership and direction six months before launching a critical product.

## Where we helped

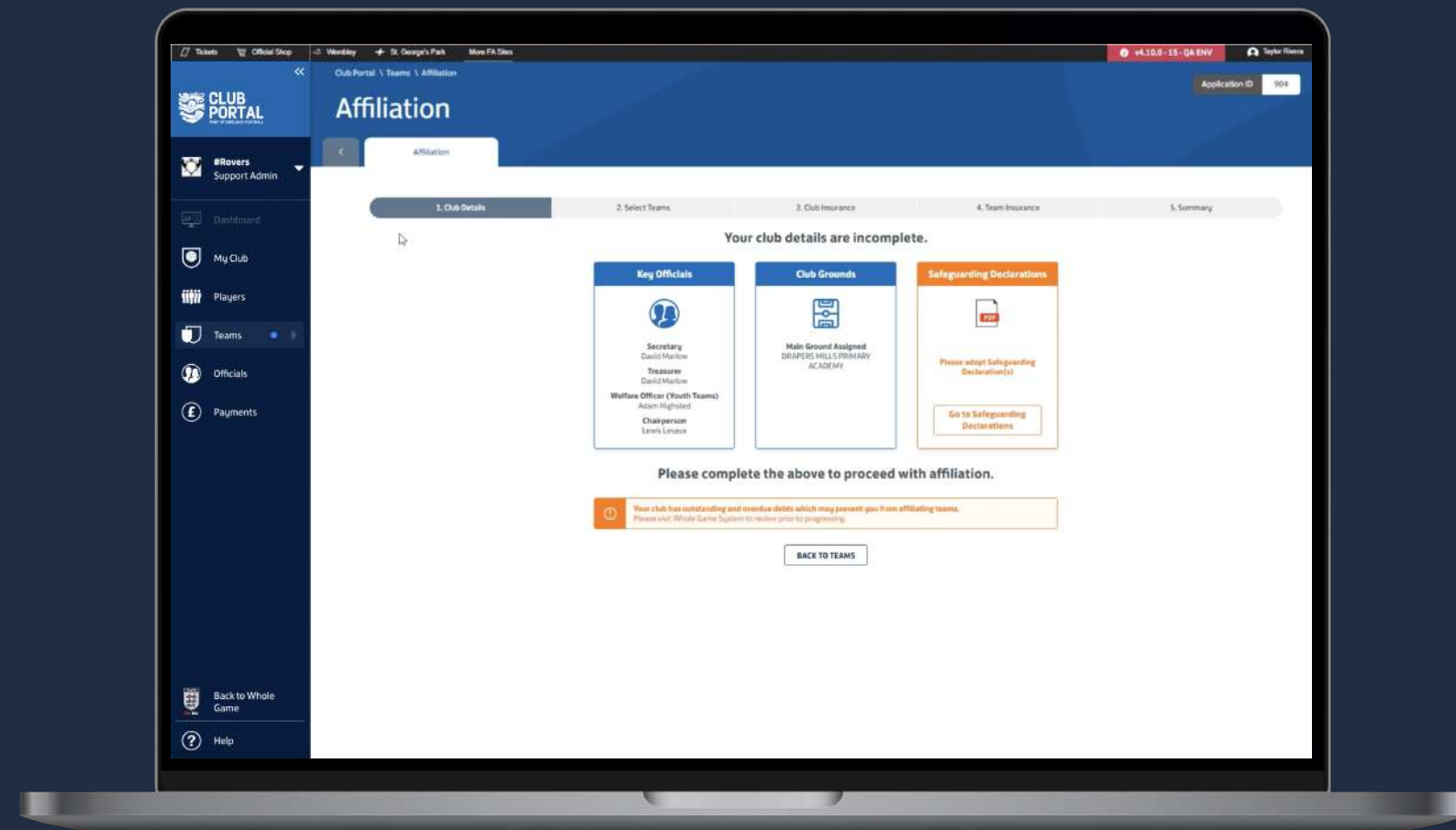
- Diagnosed user journeys with high confusion and individual screens where multiple user needs were trying to be solved in one place leading to high cognitive load
- Highlighted where the product failed to meet WCAG standards and the risk this created
- Suggestion to take inspiration from other administrative based products and harness industry standard patterns



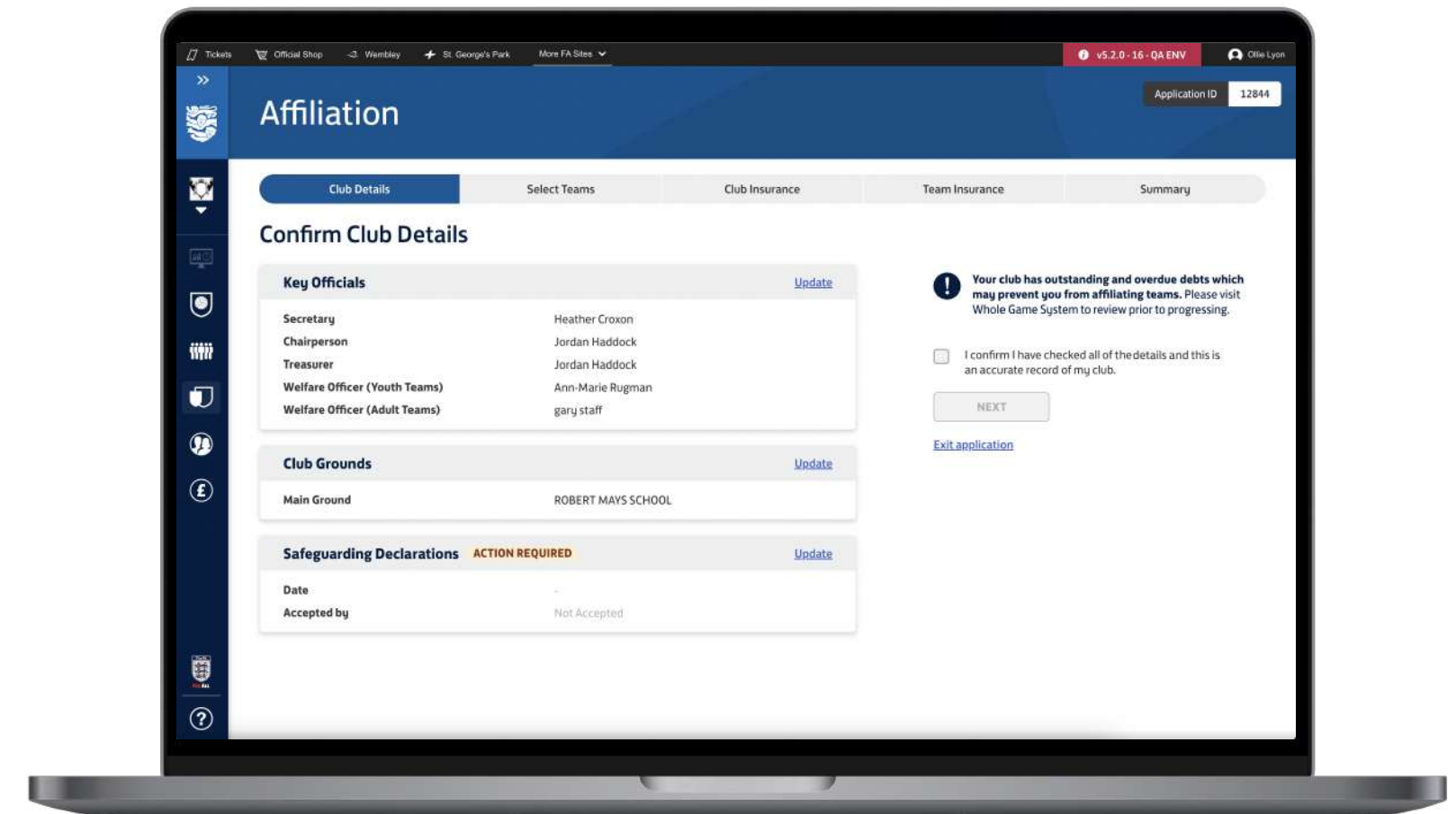
\*After UX audit



# Affiliation application Before



# Affiliation application After



# Usability problems in a priority order

After completing our analysis of the digital journeys across different user journeys and understanding the key tasks being performed.

We positioned the problems in a priority order to give structure and the best approach to solving the biggest blockers users were currently experiencing.

Offering education and guidance on how the following could be implemented and working with technical teams to agree the best approach.

## High priority

1

Second class mobile experience



Stronger colour contrast needed



Define appropriate input forms



High cognitive load



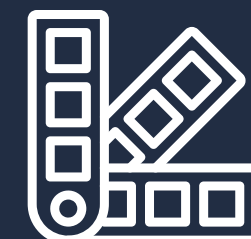
## Next priority

2

Cross pod collaboration



Defining foundational design



Navigation between products



Capitalised text use





**UX audits have allowed the team to take a step back from the low-level detail and think about the strengths and weaknesses of their product design in a more holistic way.**

**Jennifer Hards**

Design Lead at  
The Football Association





Case study

# Transport ticket purchasing

Transport for Wales



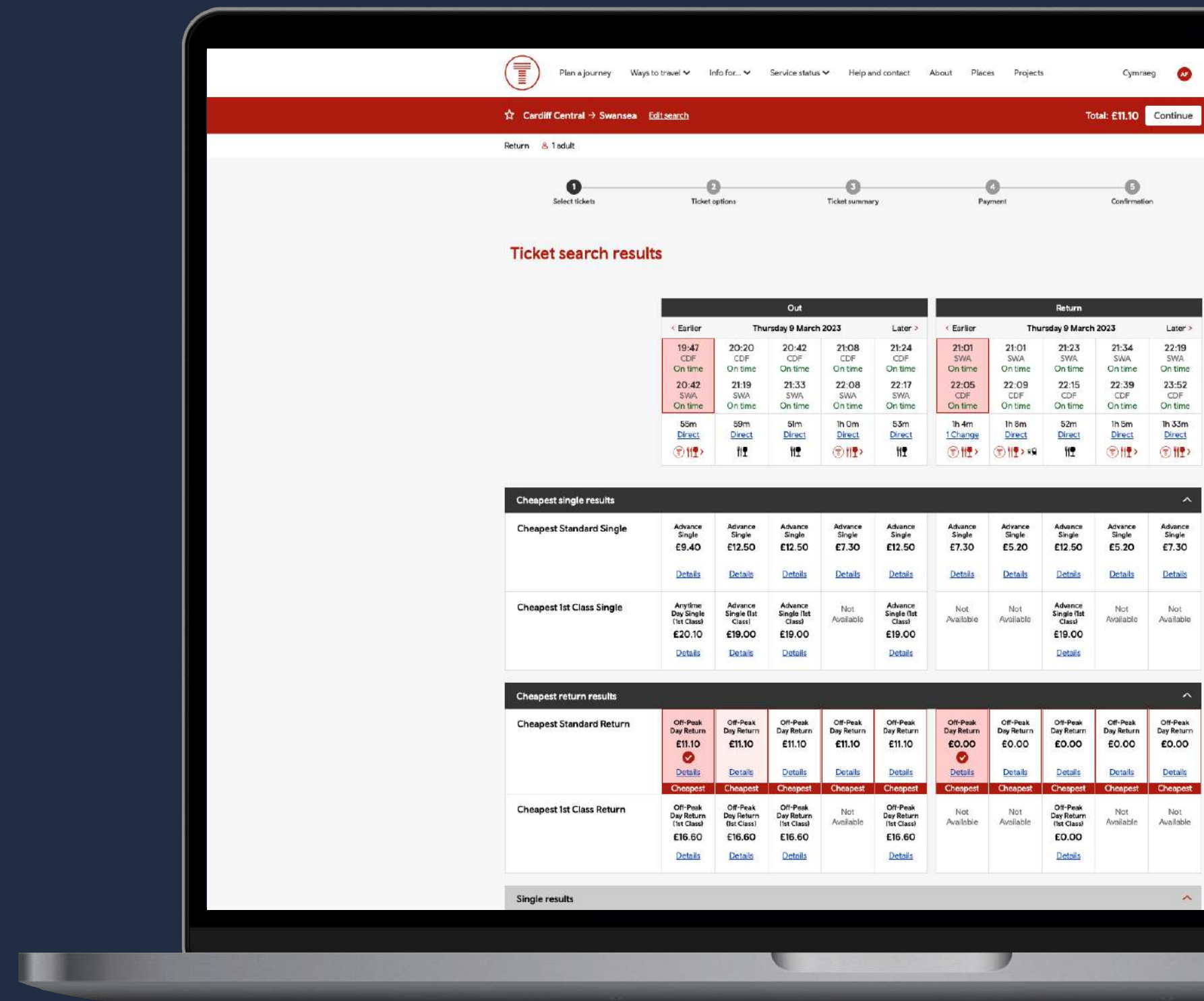


# Identifying the core of users frustrations and how to harness the power of reuse

Transport for Wales – responsible for national transport in Wales and run by the Welsh Government, they wanted to understand user’s pain points when purchasing tickets on desktop.

## Where we helped

- Identified where the core root of user’s frustrations stemmed from in the ticket purchasing journey
- Suggestion to use clever reuse of existing components to create a consistent experience
- Give focus to how the post online journey is received by users including E-mails, reminders and how people are informed about ticket access



\*Before UX audit

# Future page structure concepts

Giving inspiration of what a future vision could be by removing current pain points and giving users a simple and easy digital experience.

## Idea of new structure of the page

You searched <From> to <Destination>    Return journey    1 passenger    Add railcard    [change](#)  
 Depart after 13:30

—  —  —  —

[back to <previous step>](#)

**Content area**

Overview

**<Next step> main cta**

## Sketch concepts to illustrate possibilities on IA

### Outbound

14:30 pm → 17:30 pm			1 change	▼
			<a href="#">Journey details</a>	
<b>Outbound results</b>				
	Standard class	First class		
<a href="#">Advance single</a> ⓘ	\$20	\$220		
<a href="#">Anytime</a> ⓘ	-	\$20		
<a href="#">Off peak</a> ⓘ	\$20	-		

### Return

14:30 pm → 17:30 pm			1 change	▼
			<a href="#">Journey details</a>	
<b>Return results</b>				
	Standard class	First class		
<a href="#">Advance single</a> ⓘ	\$40	\$100		
<a href="#">Anytime</a> ⓘ	-	\$20		
<a href="#">Off peak</a> ⓘ	\$30	-		



# Usability problems in a priority order

After completing our analysis of the digital journeys across different ticketing scenarios.

We positioned the problems in a priority order to give structure and best approach to solving the biggest blockers users were currently experiencing.

## High priority

1

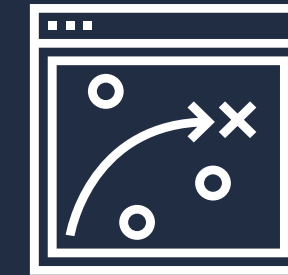
Unclear direction



Table confusion



Page structure



Emails and Tickets



## Next priority

2

Help text



Bold text overuse



Make areas accessible



Misuse of red





**We received a fantastic piece of analysis that helped us break the complex problem space into easy-to-solve recommendations.**

**Adam Stead**

Head of Digital Product Management at  
Transport for Wales

# Contact





# Get in touch

Whether it's about something specific or a barely-there idea, please get in touch.



**Rob Armes**

rob.armes@circularux.com

+44 (0)7 508 523 234

You can read and share the accompanying blog post [UX Audit: Why it's valuable, the business benefits and ensuring users keep coming back](#)



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