



EUAN'S GUIDE – OPENING UP INFORMATION ABOUT DISABLED ACCESS

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By Charlotte Knight

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With thanks to Euan MacDonald, Co-Founder of Euan's Guide for writing this blog post.

Ultimately, the idea came to my sister and me as we wanted to find out new places to visit with good disabled access and to share our experiences of visiting local places. There were a couple of key moments that led to the 'light bulb' moment.

The first was going to T in the Park festival - with trepidation! This is an outdoor music festival in Scotland - known for being muddy! We had won tickets at a charity event and went along not knowing what to expect. The staff were amazing and the accessible viewing platforms were great - we'd had no way of knowing this or finding out about access before we went and we really wanted to be able to recommend this to other people.



The second was going to a concert in Glasgow. I'd bought what I'd been told were tickets for a wheelchair accessible viewing area. When we got there, we were faced with a large flight of stairs and a staff member offered to carry me(!) upstairs. I politely declined and in effect got paid to go away.

We actually started talking about the idea of a website when friends came from London to visit and we were trying to think of somewhere new to go instead of our usual haunts and we just couldn't find any reliable information on disabled !

I should also mention here that Euan's Guide is as much about places you need to go as places you want to go. One of our users, who uses a Powerchair, told me yesterday that his bank had moved and before visiting there was no information available to tell him whether he'd be able to get in - this is exactly why there is a need for Euan's Guide.

We thought that there must be someone doing this so we did some research but couldn't find anyone that was in the way we envisaged - with a focus on the views and experiences of disabled people themselves.

To develop the concept we used some contacts - friends and friends of friends in Web and App Development, Marketing and PR were a great start. When we felt like we had enough content to launch we went live and have continued to develop the site and add new functionality non-stop since.



I think we first knew that the site was going to be a success when we started to get messages from users saying that they liked the idea. Then they would tell us to contribute and we got new reviews of places that they had visited. For me - that is the perfect outcome!

Tech has allowed Euan's Guide to come into existence without it there would be no way for us to share our information or to ask users for their opinions - if we were a book, we would be out of date as soon as we went to print.

Technology from a user perspective is even more important. Many people who use and contribute to Euan's Guide would not be able to access our information without technology.

Location technology enables our users to be more spontaneous. We launched the App in 2014 and have had great feedback of people using it to make on the spot decisions to go for a coffee or watch a movie something that previously they might not have attempted.



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working on Euan's Guide use different technologies themselves. I use a Tobii Eye Gaze myself. Others on the team use the native accessibility tools in their smartphones and laptops, whilst some use technologies such as Screen Reader and Voice Control software. All these technologies are indispensable.

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a physical sense, we are as passionate about digital accessibility... This is also not
work for another!

One of the best lessons we've learnt is that our users can often come up with the solutions for us. Recently we started collaborating with a charity that works with young people, some of whom find writing difficult. They were really helpful to use. So
based on their feedback, we added the ability to submit video reviews and the ones that have been submitted so far are fantastic! Like [this one about Wac Arts in London.](#)

One thing that struck me when looking at the other 2014 NT100 ventures is how many of them are also trying to make the world a more accessible place.

I love Braigo - the Braille printer made out of Lego. We often print Braille versions of documents and this currently involves a clanking giant of a machine that takes up a whole cupboard. To be able to print Braille on demand when you're out and about is such a genius idea!

The Sesame Touch Free Phone is another fantastic concept and opens up touch screen phones to those with disabilities that limit the use of their hands. It
't
be able to use them.

Images courtesy of Euan's Guide.