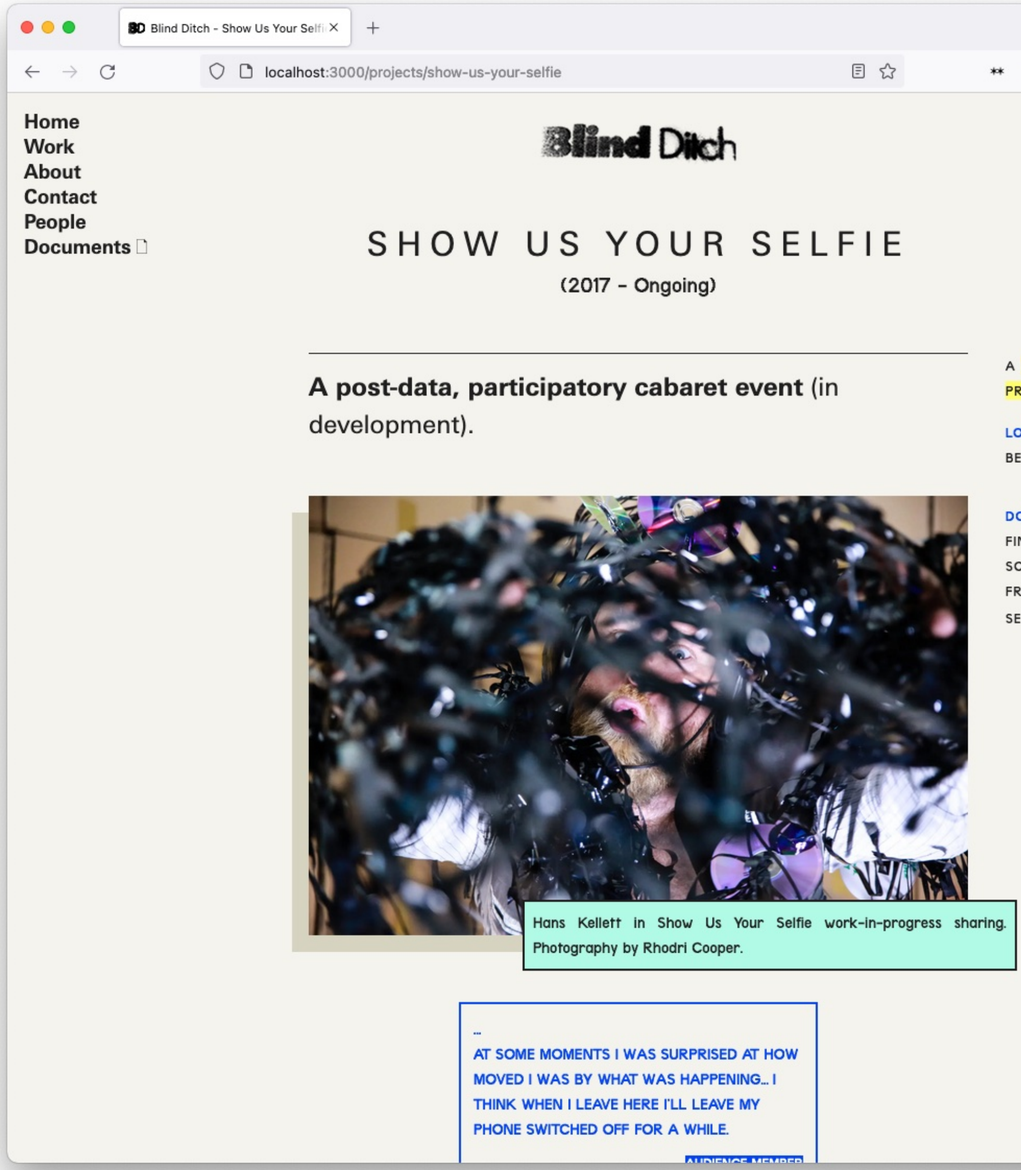
BLIND DITCH: A CASE STUDY

A UX, design and front-end project to archive 20 years of participatory art.

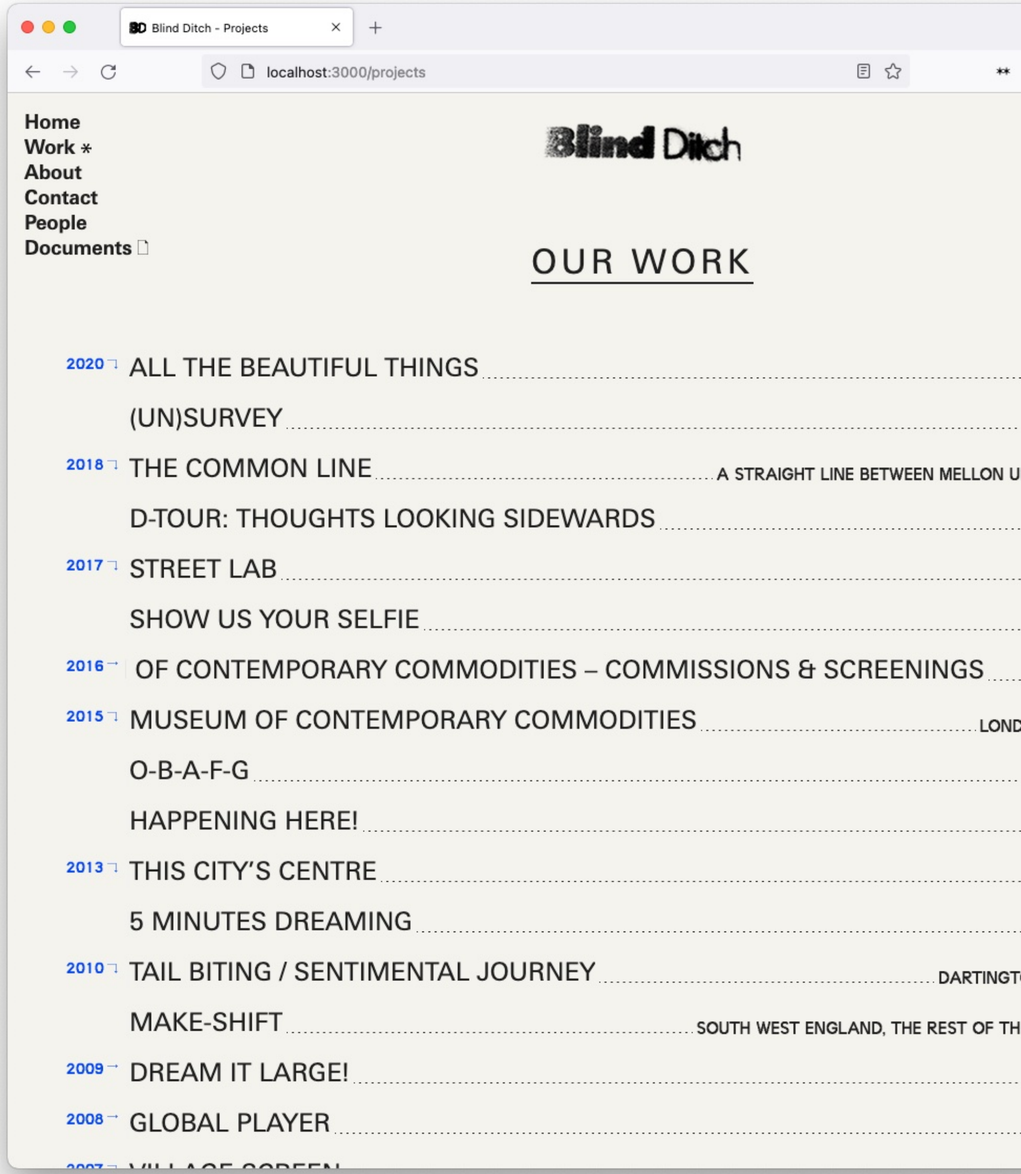
GARETH FOOTE - THE NATIONAL ARCHIVE - JUNE 2022

1. Why & Who
2. Design Process
3. Discover
4. Define
5. Design & Prototype
6. Accessibility
7. Working in Multi-disciplinary Teams
8. Project Feedback

1. WHY & WHO


Blind Ditch - Show Us Your Selfi
localhost:3000/projects/show-us-your-selfie
Home
Work
About
Contact
People
Documents
Blind Ditch
SHOW US YOUR SELFIE
(2017 - Ongoing)
A post-data, participatory cabaret event (in development).
Hans Kellett in Show Us Your Selfie work-in-progress sharing. Photography by Rhodri Cooper.
...
AT SOME MOMENTS I WAS SURPRISED AT HOW MOVED I WAS BY WHAT WAS HAPPENING... I THINK WHEN I LEAVE HERE I'LL LEAVE MY PHONE SWITCHED OFF FOR A WHILE.
AUDIENCE MEMBER

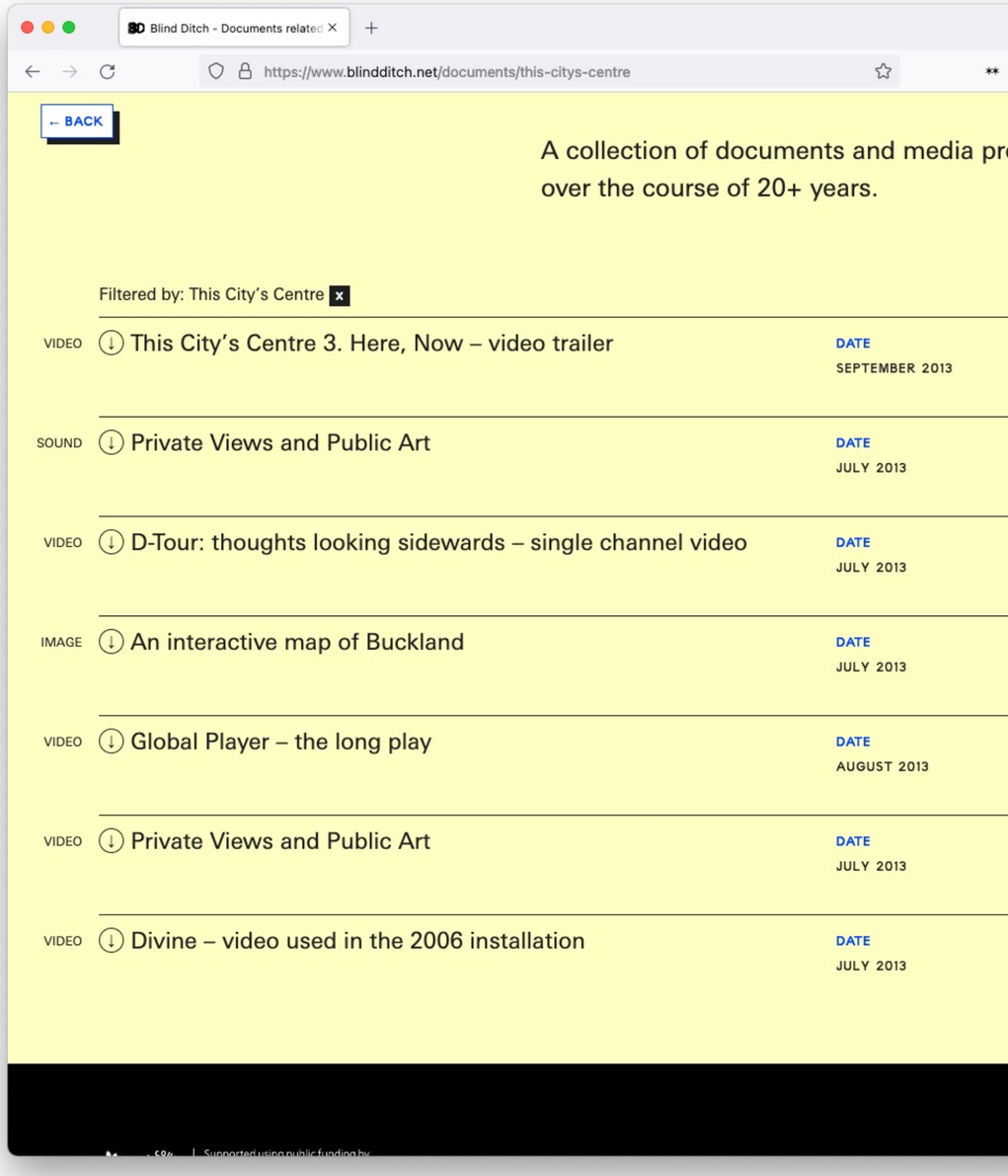
- Demonstrates a holistic design process
- Example of good practices in UI design
- Interesting constraints and opportunities
- Open to a participatory design process



1. WHY THIS PROJECT?

A collective of artists working in South West England since 1999 making experimental performance, social art and cultural events.

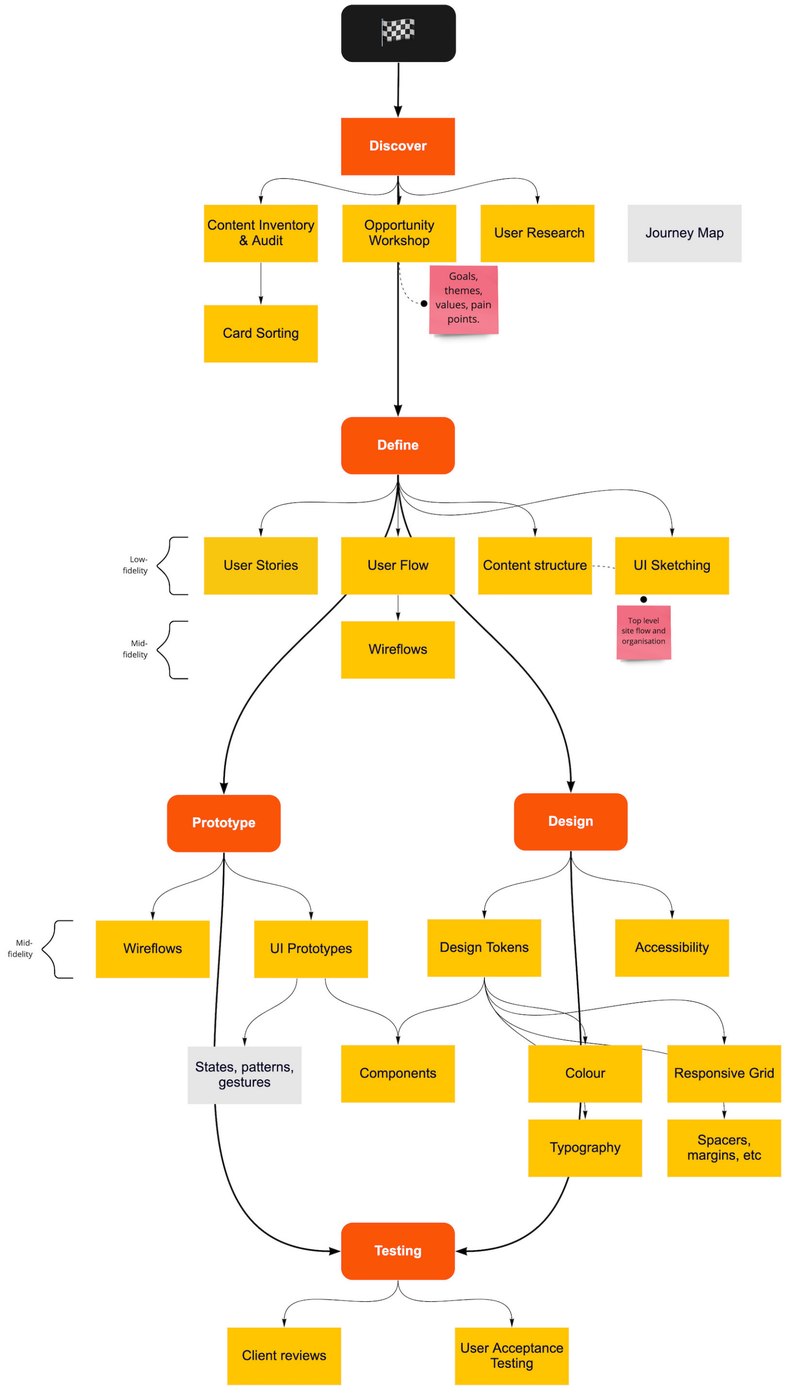
They were funded by the arts council to create a digital archive of their 20+ years of work.



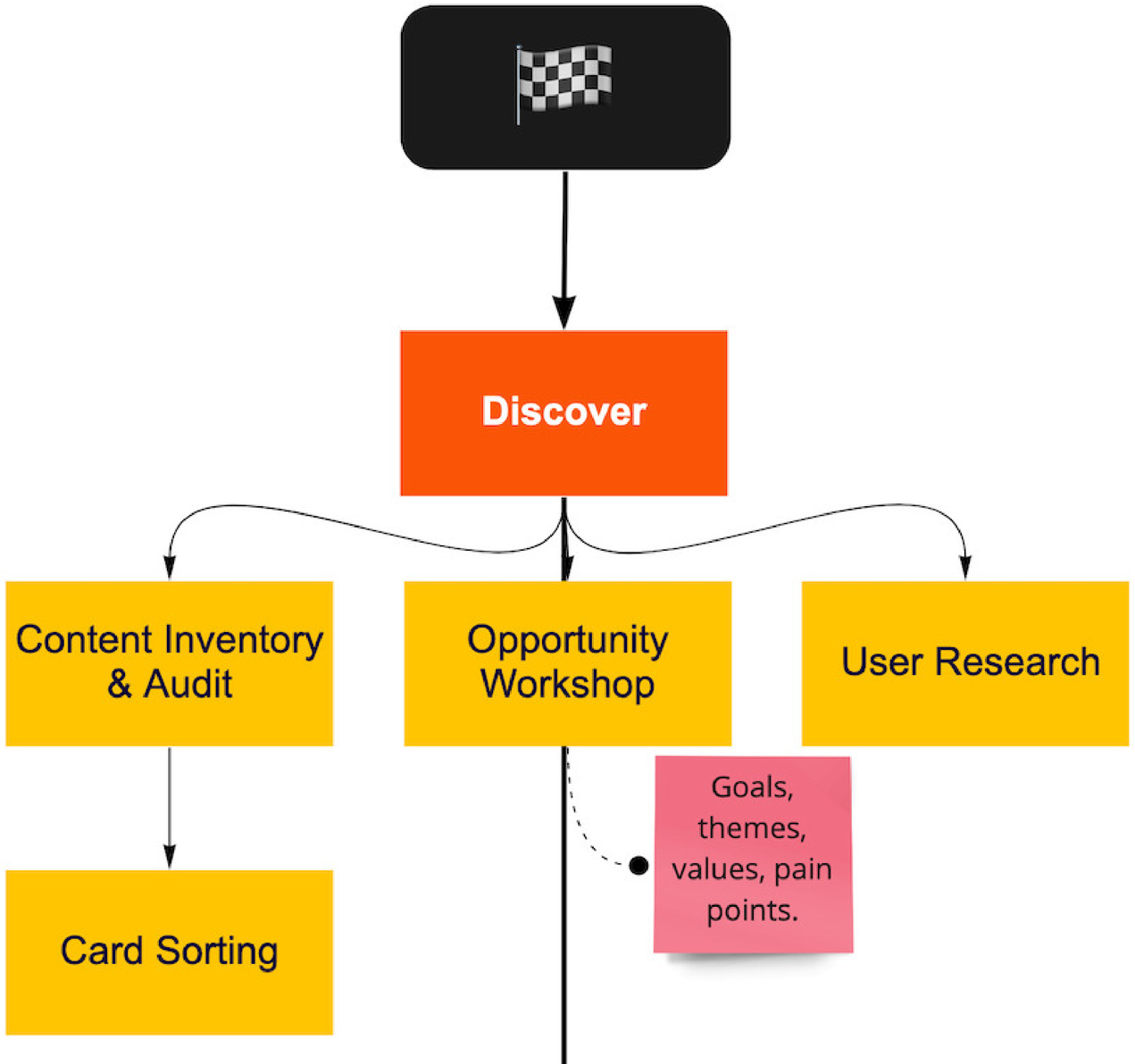
1. WHO ARE BLIND DITCH?

2. DESIGN PROCESS

Useful reflections on the unique nature of each design process.

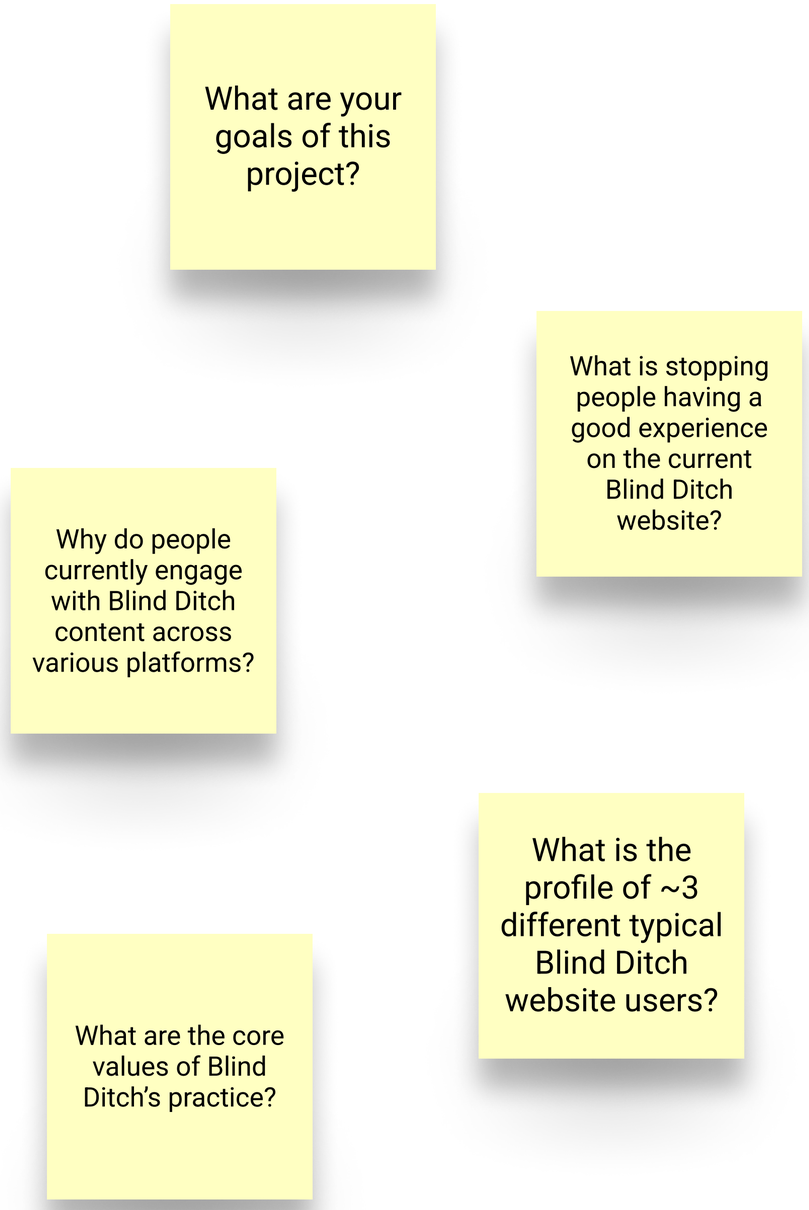


3. DISCOVER


Discover
Content Inventory & Audit
Opportunity Workshop
User Research
Goals, themes, values, pain points.
Card Sorting

Workshop conducted remotely with 2 artists from Blind Ditch.

1. Project scope & timelines
2. Establish **common understanding** of project **aims and opportunities**
3. Agree on **research questions** →



3. DISCOVER: OPPORTUNITY WORKSHOP

Interviews with individuals associated with Blind Ditch. For example...

- An Exeter-based gallerist who has held Blind Ditch public events in their space, and...
- A former participant in a Blind Ditch project living in a rural Devon.

Participant discussing local Blind Ditch event

“Really enjoyed how they take something so simple, something not many people think about...and enlarge it to encompass **a whole range of different themes - community, ethnicities, etc**”

Collaborator discussing specific project

“It’s the scope and ambition of their projects, the technical **adventurousness**, the **collaborative** and **participatory** ethos embedded in it”

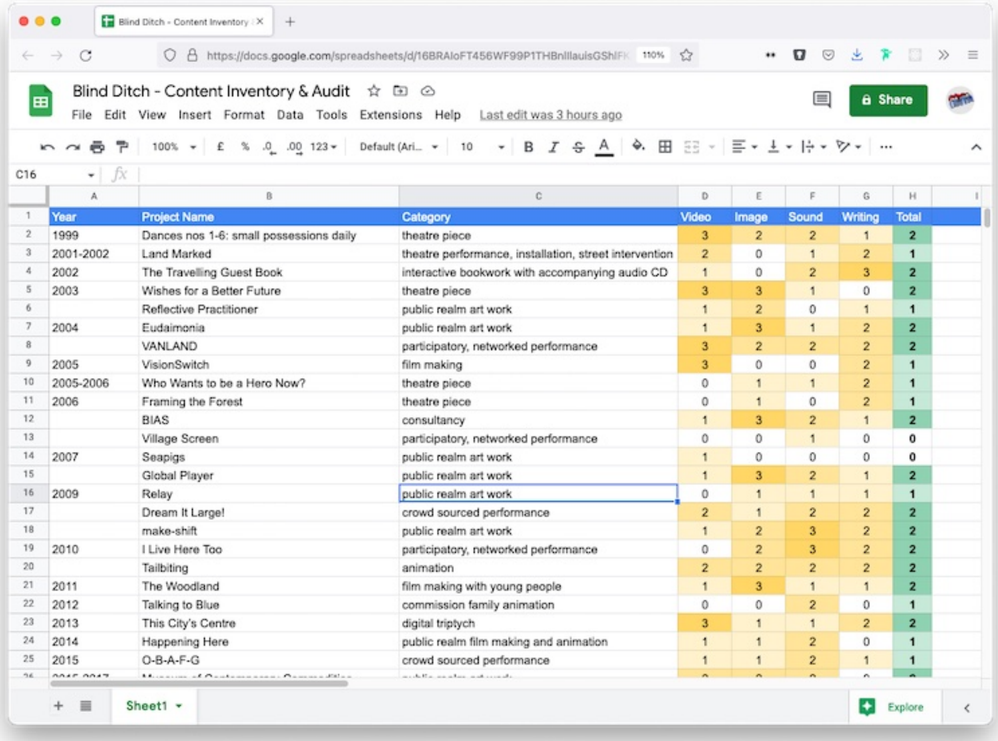
3. DISCOVER: USER INTERVIEWS

“A big challenge was the range of analogue and early digital materials we had to share.

Also that some projects were highly visual and well documented. Others were more DIY and sound or writing based with hardly any documentation.

The quality of the documentation was varied”

Client 1, Opportunity Workshop



Year	Project Name	Category	Video	Image	Sound	Writing	Total
1999	Dances nos 1-6: small possessions daily	theatre piece	3	2	2	1	2
2001-2002	Land Marked	theatre performance, installation, street intervention	2	0	1	2	1
2002	The Travelling Guest Book	interactive bookwork with accompanying audio CD	1	0	2	3	2
2003	Wishes for a Better Future	theatre piece	3	3	1	0	2
	Reflective Practitioner	public realm art work	1	2	0	1	1
2004	Eudaimonia	public realm art work	1	3	1	2	2
	VANLAND	participatory, networked performance	3	2	2	2	2
2005	VisionSwitch	film making	3	0	0	2	1
2005-2006	Who Wants to be a Hero Now?	theatre piece	0	1	1	2	1
2006	Framing the Forest	theatre piece	0	1	0	2	1
	BIAS	consultancy	1	3	2	1	2
	Village Screen	participatory, networked performance	0	0	1	0	0
2007	Seapigs	public realm art work	1	0	0	0	0
	Global Player	public realm art work	1	3	2	1	2
2009	Relay	public realm art work	0	1	1	1	1
	Dream It Large!	crowd sourced performance	2	1	2	2	2
	make-shift	public realm art work	1	2	3	2	2
2010	I Live Here Too	participatory, networked performance	0	2	3	2	2
	Tailbiting	animation	2	2	2	2	2
2011	The Woodland	film making with young people	1	3	1	1	2
2012	Talking to Blue	commission family animation	0	0	2	0	1
2013	This City's Centre	digital triptych	3	1	1	2	2
2014	Happening Here	public realm film making and animation	1	1	2	0	1
2015	O-B-A-F-G	crowd sourced performance	1	1	2	1	1

3. DISCOVER: CONTENT INVENTORY & AUDIT

From the various documented discussions with stakeholders I formulated the following insights that were discussed and agreed with the client.

Importance of l**ocal participation**.

Archive should reflect social nature of art work.

Each **project narrative is unique**.

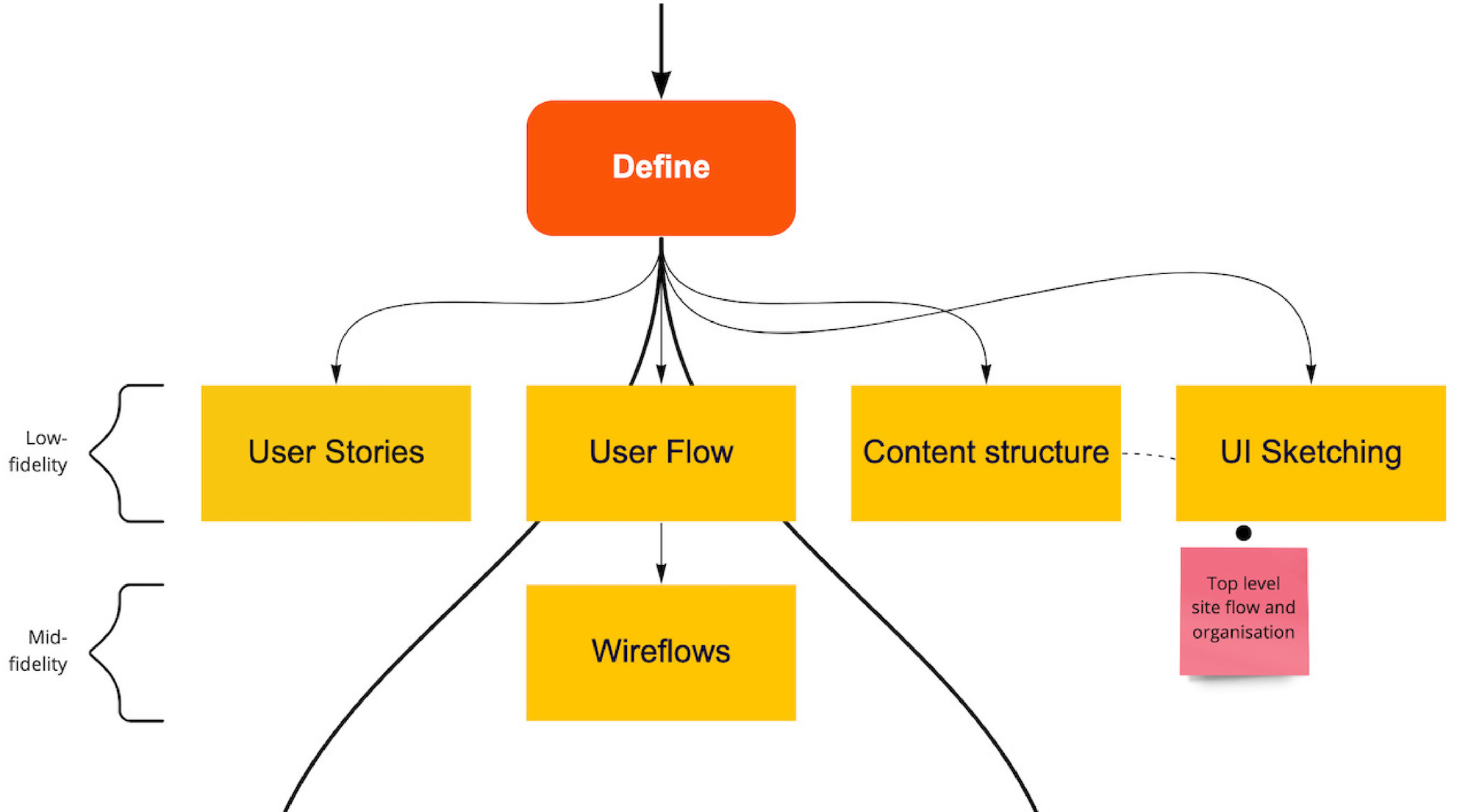
Content is extensive and rich, but of mixed quality.

Diversity of audience & importance of **inclusivity**.

Rural / urban.
Socioeconomic.
Technical competencies.

3. DISCOVER: INSIGHTS

4. DEFINE


Define
Low-fidelity
Mid-fidelity
User Stories
User Flow
Content structure
UI Sketching
Wireflows
Top level site flow and organisation

From the **stakeholder interviews** a series of **user stories** were established.

Blake has low bandwith and old device

Blake lives in St Austell where there is poor network connection and they also use a low powered mobile device. Their child has taken part in a youth film-making project run by Blind Ditch. Blake wants to see other work by Blind Ditch and, in the future, the documentation from the project their child is in.

Jen wants to participate in local Exeter event

...

Ruth is an associate of Blind Ditch

...

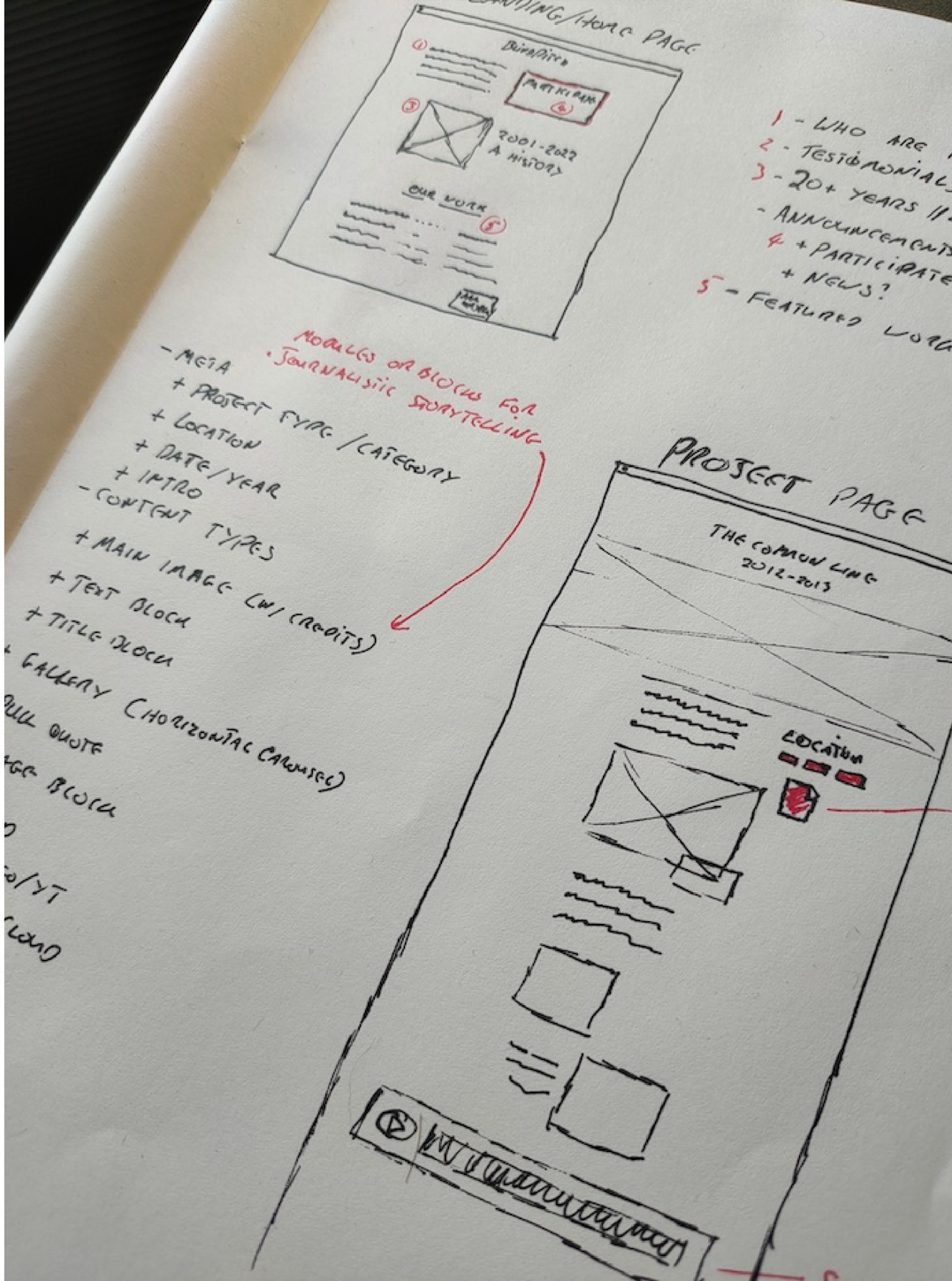
Commissioning panel assessing Blind Ditch for funding

...

4. DEFINE: USER STORIES

Building on the user stories, user flows and content inventory & audit.

Sketching was used to visualise and communicate initial ideas for **page-level content** and **rough composition**.

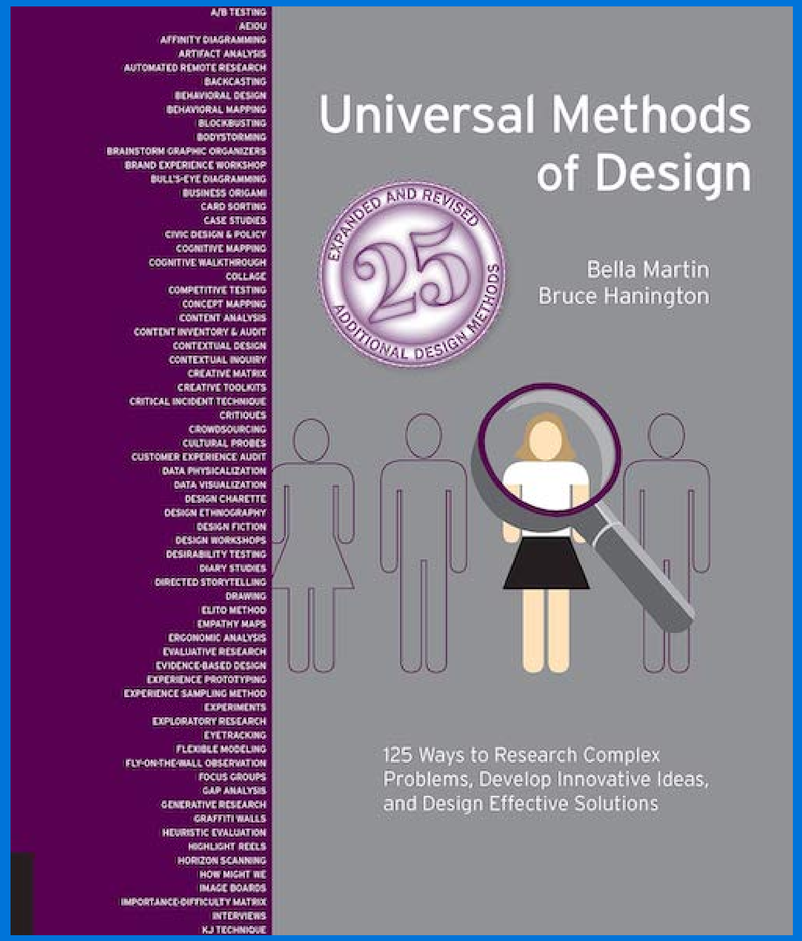


4. DEFINE: UI SKETCHING

The relevant ouputs from these phases were presented and discussed with the client.

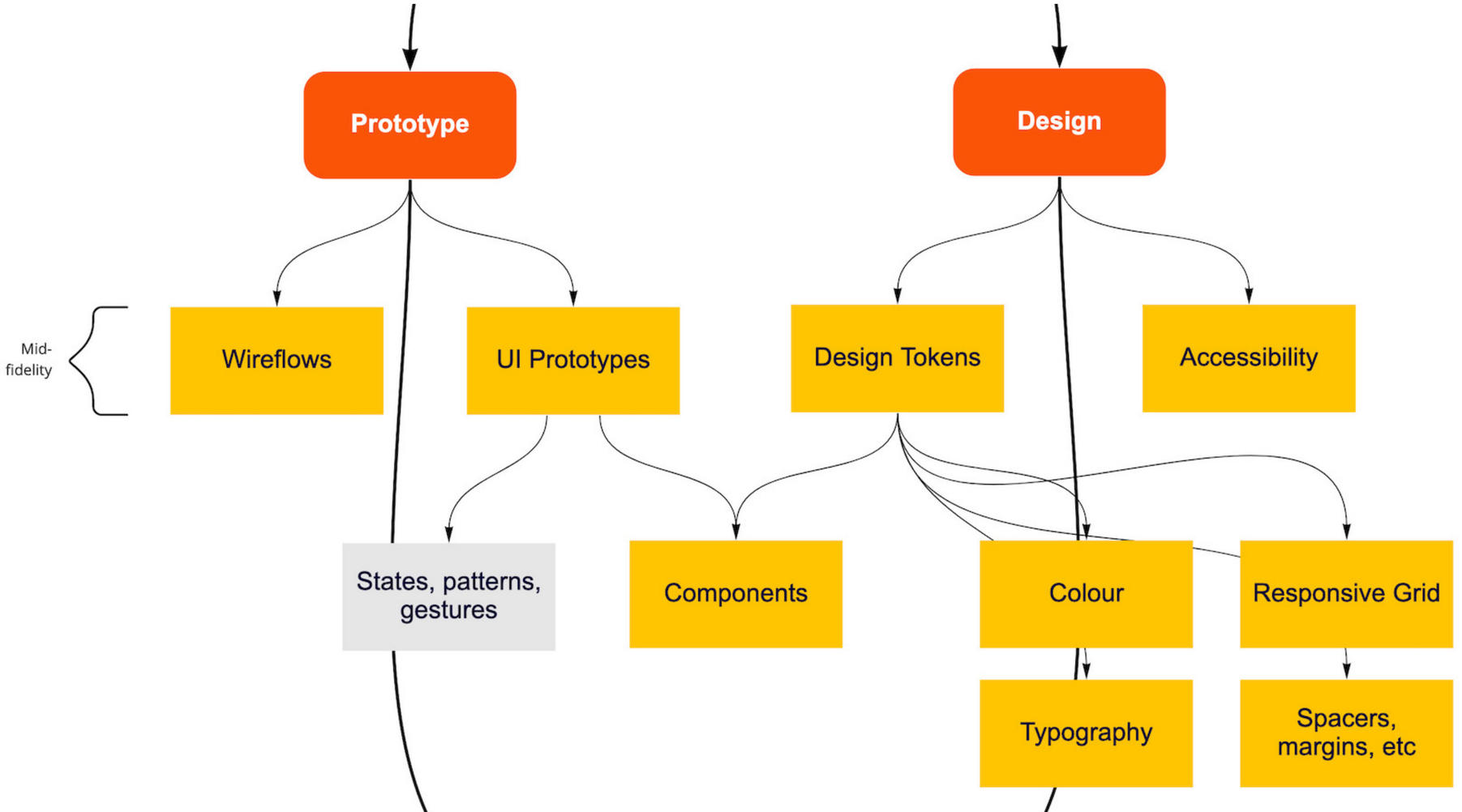
We then defined a set of **How Might We** statements together →

4. DEFINE: HOW MIGHT WE...



- UX & DESIGN RESEARCH

5. DESIGN & PROTOTYPE



For a site of this scale a large-scale design system (e.g. GDS, Material) isn’t necessary.

But the principles help to create a consistent and communicable set of design characteristics.

5. DESIGN & PROTOTYPE: DESIGN SYSTEM (LITE)

Typography

Display

Large copy for introducing pages or articles.

Display Heading - 48px

48px / 110% line height

Headings

Various headings. Each has heading has an equivalent small for < 1024px.

HEADING 1 - 32PX

125% line height / 4px letter spacing / Uppercase

HEADING 1 SMALL - 22PX

125% line height / 4px letter spacing / Uppercase

HEADING 4 - 18PX

100% line height / 0px letter spacing

HEADING 4 SMALL - 14PX

100% line height / 0px letter spacing

Heading 2 - 24px

130% line height / 0px letter spacing

Heading 2 small - 18px

130% line height / 0px letter spacing

Heading 3 - 24px

100% line height / 0px letter spacing

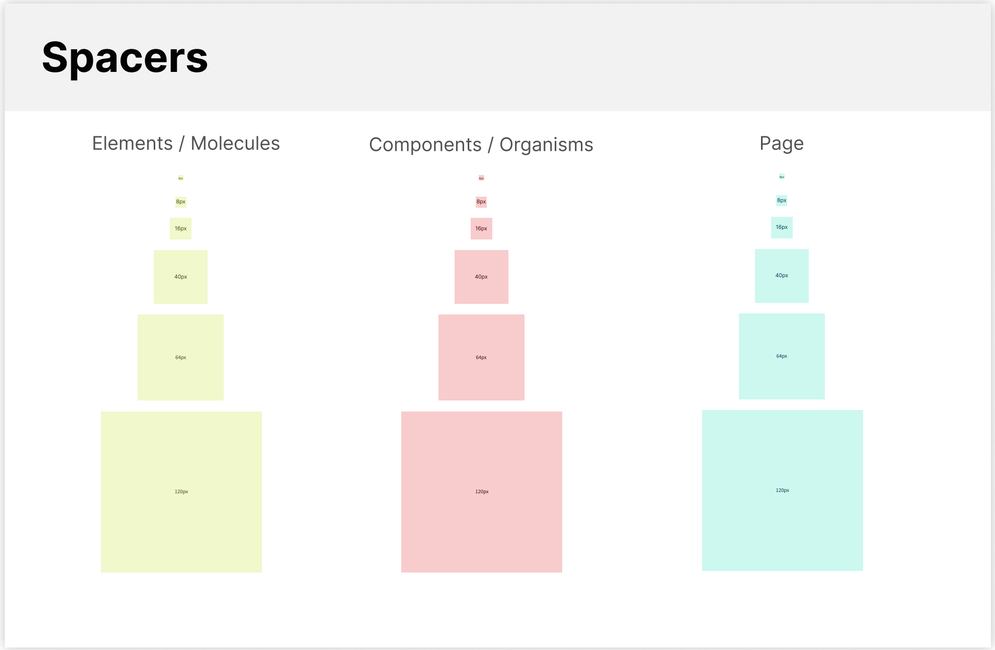
Heading 3 small - 18px

100% line height / 0px letter spacing

Body Copy

Benefits for designers include consistency, extensibility, and (eventually) speed.

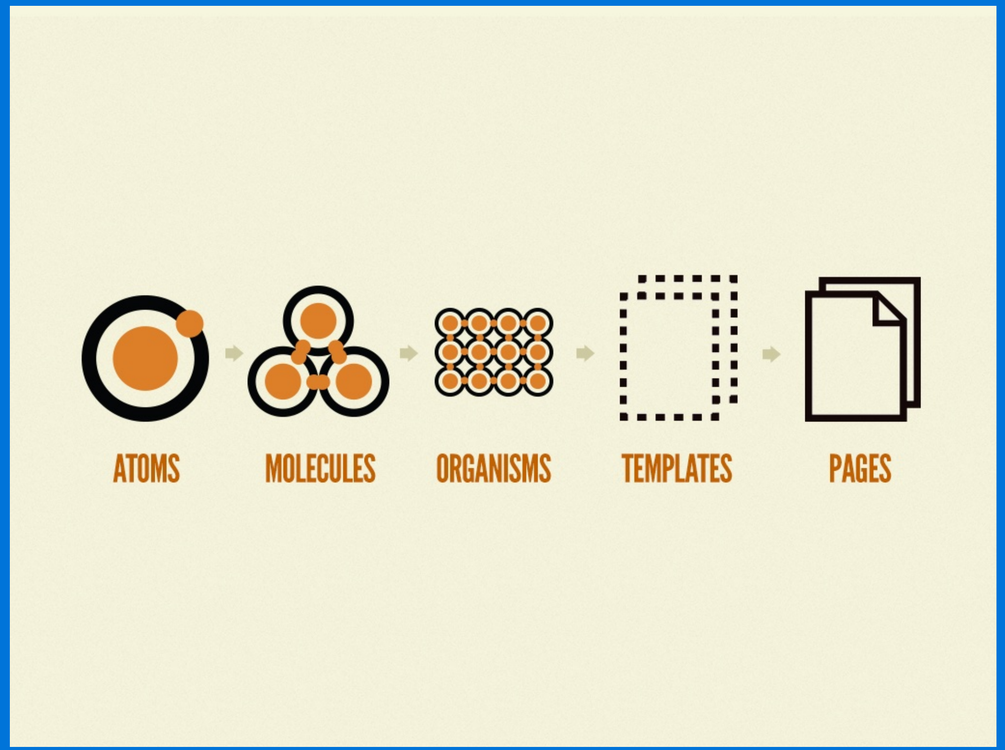
Also, this creates the basis of **design tokens**, which can be passed back and forth between design and development team as data.



5. DESIGN & PROTOTYPE: DESIGN SYSTEM (LITE)

My process uses concepts from Atomic Design, however my overall approach to design frameworks is to adopt them with caution, ensuring they are contextually appropriate.

If possible a good design framework allows designers to cherry pick the parts needed for a project.



- ATOMIC DESIGN

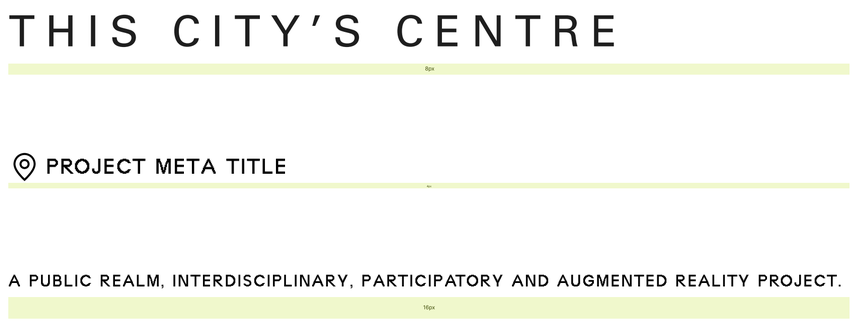
Molecules are your basic HTML elements. **Organisms** are combinations of molecules that make more complex structures.

The **green** spacing is specific to molecules.

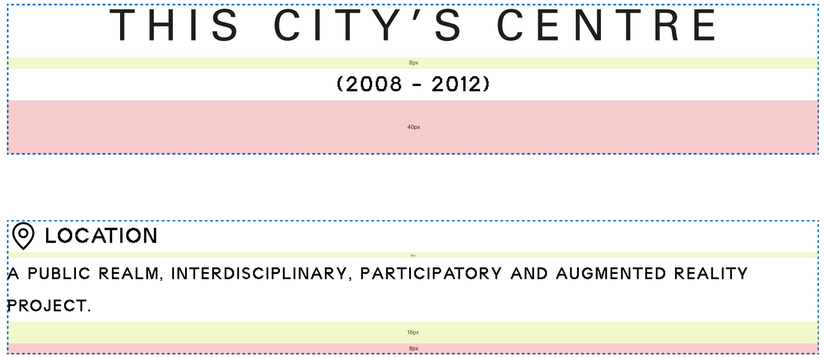
These **red** spacing is specific to the organisms.

5. DESIGN & PROTOTYPE: MOLECULES & ORGANISMS

Elements - Molecules



Components - Organisms

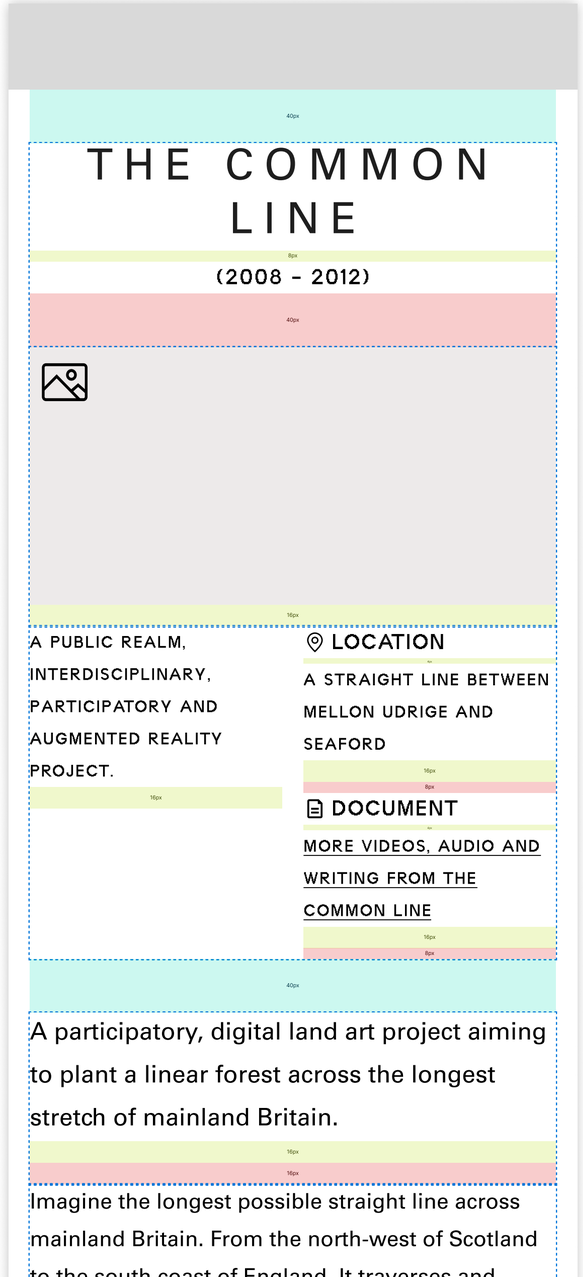


These can be used to build up either **template** fragments or entire **page** structures.

The **green** spacing is specific to molecules.

These **red** spacing is specific to the organisms.

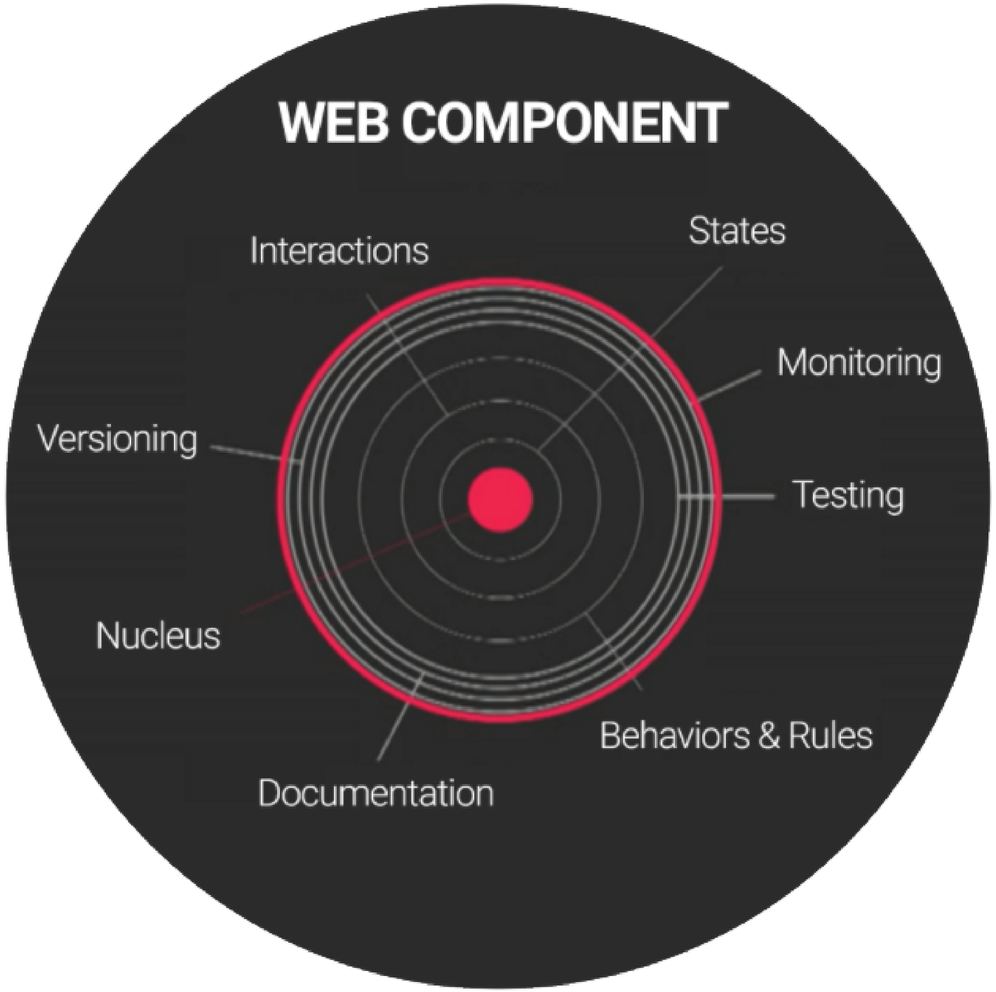
The **blue** spacing is specific to the template or page level.



5. DESIGN & PROTOTYPE: LAYOUT

Contain styling, interactions and behaviour in discrete components.

Mirrors good practice in web development and the way UI frameworks (e.g. React) and native Web Components work.



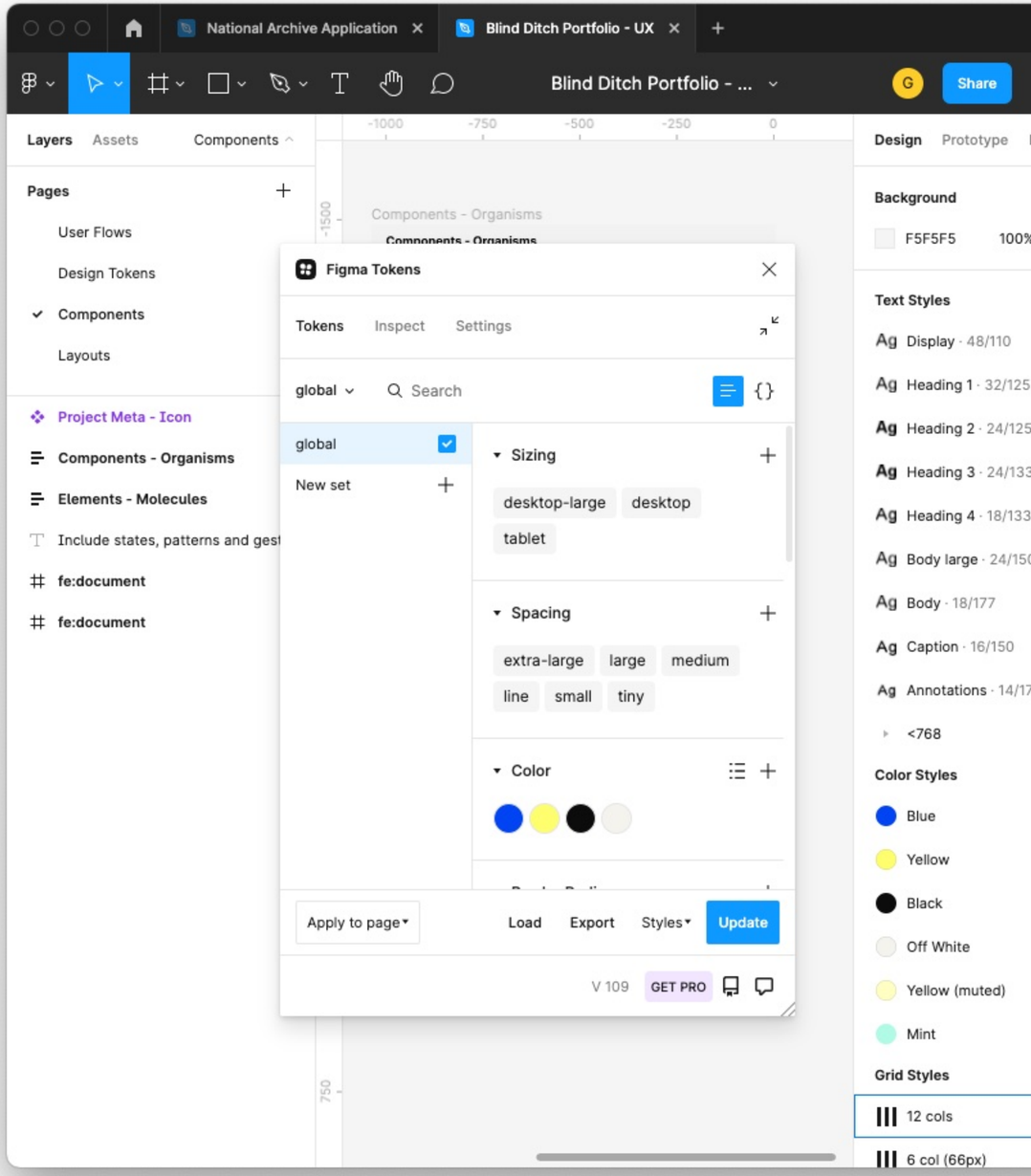
Justin O'Neill, 2017

5. DESIGN & PROTOTYPE: WEB COMPONENTS

Modern UI design and prototyping tools **encourage practices** and **enable workflows** that mirror those in development.

A design system can directly translate into coded libraries and components.

In both design and build this encourages consistency, reduces redundancy, and supports reuse.

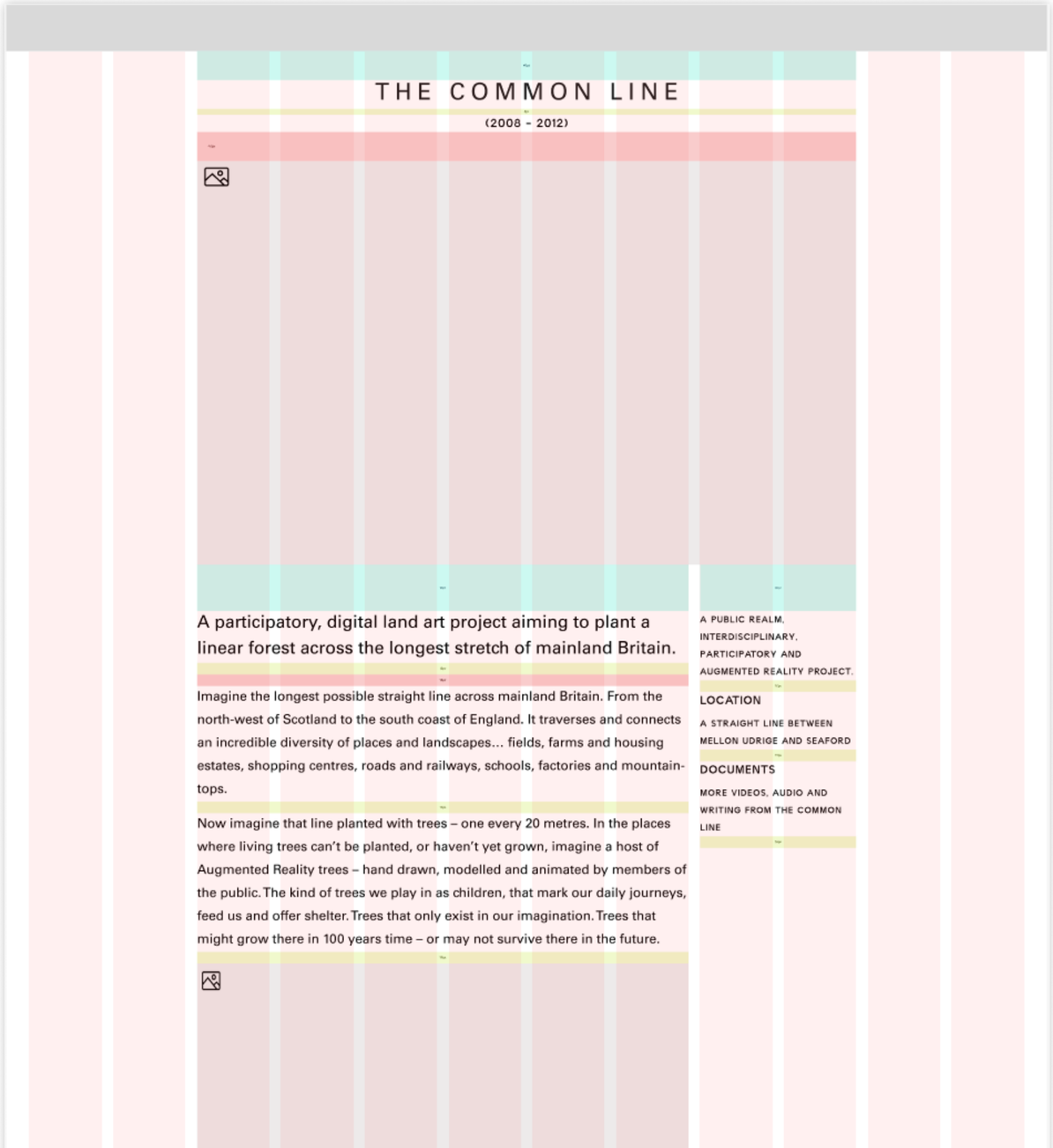


5. DESIGN & PROTOTYPE: TOOLS

Tools allow for design files to ***be*** the documentation, however a detailed hand-over to developers would include appropriate annotations.

>=1440px

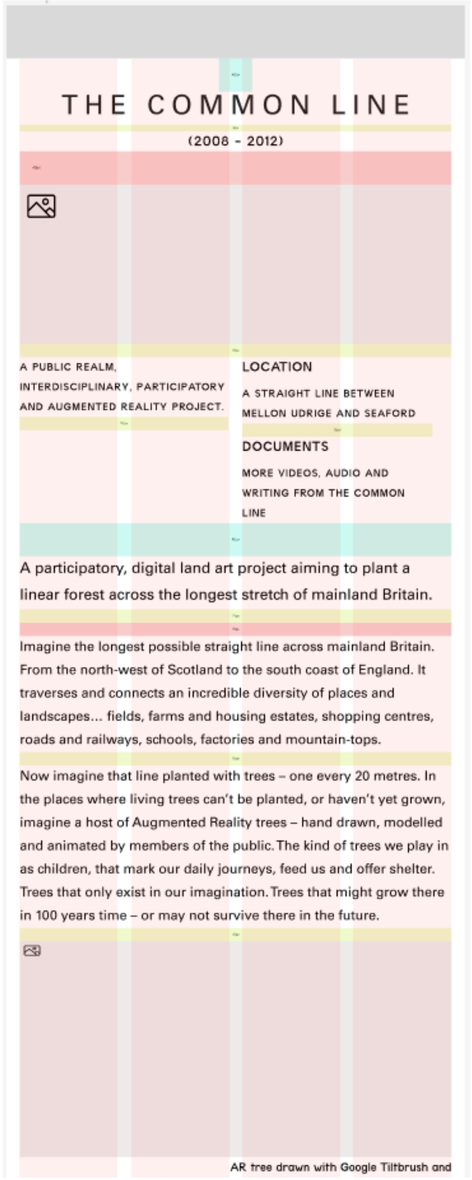
Max width 1376px
Margins 32px
12 columns
Columns 100px
Gutters 16px



5. DESIGN & PROTOTYPE: DOCUMENTATION

Tools allow for design files to ***be*** the documentation, however a detailed hand-over to developers would include appropriate annotations.

<768px
Margins 16px
4 columns
Columns variable
Gutters 16px



5. DESIGN & PROTOTYPE: DOCUMENTATION

Software such as Figma or XD make it trivial to create **interactive UI prototypes** and **for remote client and user testing.**

Asynchronous commenting or live demonstrations are incredibly easy and allow a more participatory workflow with stakeholders.

Storytelling the projects.

Complexity of each project requires a flexible/modular system for client to narrativise their work.

A ‘documents’ section.

An alternative to the project narrative that allows for specific/ key media items to be promoted.

Announcements

The participatory nature of their work requires the option to forefront opportunities for public participation.

5. DESIGN & PROTOTYPE: OUTCOMES

6. ACCESSIBILITY

Using Web Content Accessibilty Guidelines (WCAG 2.1) to ensure the design specifications ensure maximum accessibility.

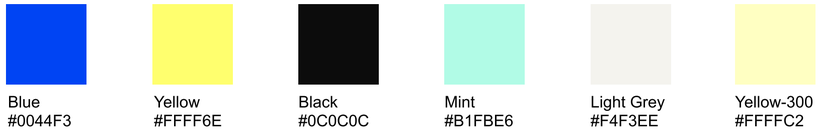
Following the POUR principles:

Perceivable
Operable
Understandable
Robust

6. ACCESSIBILITY

>4.5 AA Large **Pass**
>5.0 + AA Normal & AAA Large **Pass**
>7.0 + AAA Normal **Pass**

Colours



Light Grey #F4F3EE

Yellow-300 #FFFFC2

Mint #B1FBE6

6. ACCESSIBILITY

1. Colour is not used as the only visual means of conveying information or indicating an action
2. Text can be resized without assistive technology up to 200 percent without loss of content or functionality
3. Blocks of text are no more than 80 characters (40 if CJK) in width
4. Base font size is at least 16px
5. Line spacing (leading) is at least 1.5 within paragraphs
6. Make all functionality available from a keyboard.
7. Focus events work as expected and do not iniated unexpected behaviour
8. Starting with appropriate semantic HTML, including descriptive page titles.
9. Moving or scroling text/content can be paused.
10. Implement CSS media queries for accessibility, e.g. prefers reduced motion
11. Bypass blocks: Include “skip to content” link
12. Anchors are on descriptive text, never 'Read more'
13. Provide text alternatives for any non-text content. e.g. images or non-text controls
14. Starting with appropriate semantic HTML.
15. Using ARIA when appropriate, including for complex JS based interactions, for example hamburger menus
16. Ensure compatibility with current and future user agents, including assistive technologies

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

UK Government, 2021

Accessible digital environments are also necessary for the non-disabled, and/or those compromised due to situations such as a broken limb, pregnancy, or simply juggling tasks and only having one hand to work with.

Digital Accessibility Syllabus, 2021

6. ACCESSIBILITY

Applying accessibility principles improves overall user experience and makes digital products and interfaces easier to use **for everyone**.

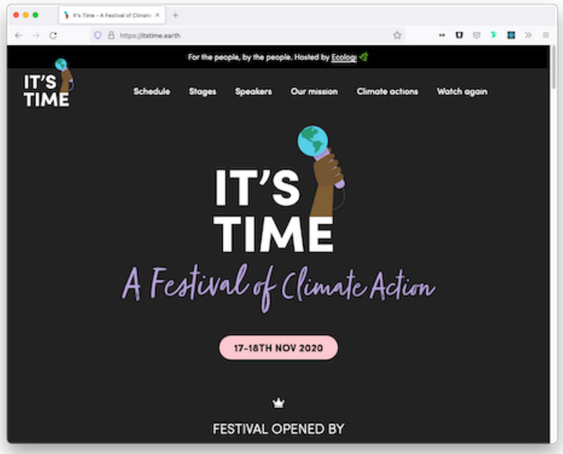
6. ACCESSIBILITY

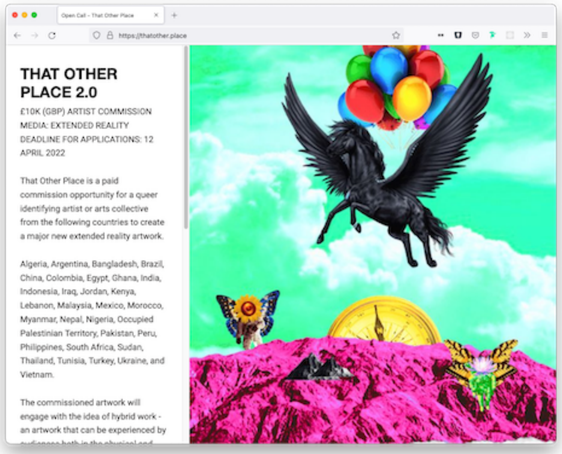
8. WORKING IN MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAMS

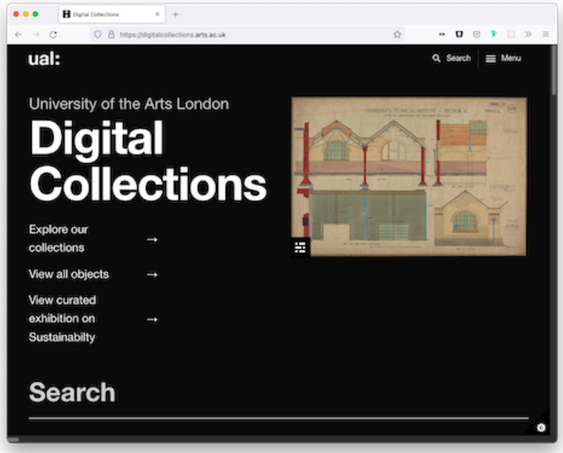
In the last 6 years much of my team has been academic colleagues.

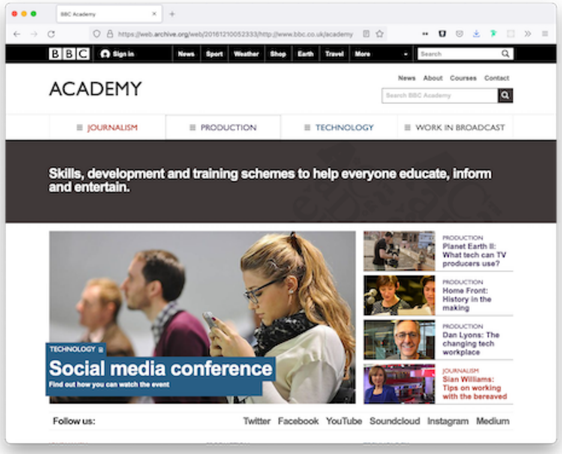
During this time I have contracted on various diverse teams as a UX consultant, designer and front-end developer.

In all cases the teams are broad in skillset and knowledge requiring an openness to collaboration and considered communication.









8. WORKING IN MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAMS

9. PROJECT FEEDBACK

“The Blind Ditch portfolio of work done over twenty years as an artists collective is not easy to categorise.

Gareth was also able to listen to my experience of the previous challenges I'd had in trying to narrate our range of work coherently to an online audience, and translate these challenges into solutions that spoke to the asethetics of our art practice as much as communicating the value of our art outputs.”

Client, via email

9. PROJECT FEEDBACK

THANK YOU