

**Mike Thomas**, Lead Product Designer



*Product design* and  
*team leadership* for  
start-ups, scale-ups,  
and enterprise.

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*Hello*, I'm Mike, a full-spectrum design lead with over 14 years of experience working in product, brand and innovation contexts across a range of industries, from logistics and education, to consumer finance and energy.

I can offer the right organisation a purpose-driven, outcome-aligned blend of both IC and leadership experience at all levels, with a strong breadth of design craft nous, and a deeply collaborative approach to supporting the progress of colleagues while developing an energised and thriving team culture.

I very firmly believe that good design is a non-hierarchical, multi-disciplinary team sport, and successful teams win by raising each other up.

In this deck, you will find:

- Details on the skill set I can bring to your organisation;
- A brief overview of my recent career impact;
- Some sample design activities I've lead in a specific project;
- A bit more detail about me as person, and what I'm looking for in my next role.

Any questions, please let me know.

Warm regards,

*Mike*

Design is a human-centric, outcome-aligned team sport. Good design happens when good designers apply their practice with *honesty*, *empathy* and *flexibility*.

*Great design* happens when teams raise each other up.



I break down my IC skills in to eight core areas of practice...

## *Research*

User research, both qual and quant, desk research and generating meaningful insights through analysis.

## *Information architecture*

Structuring content, developing taxonomies, crafting navigation and formulating other activities that make information accessible, usable and understandable.

## *Interaction design*

The structural design of a software interface, supporting a user's flow through a system and ability to successfully interact.

## *Visual design*

Color, composition, typography, visual hierarchy and brand expression that present the product or service in way that not only is clear and approachable, but appropriately exhibits personality.

(In no particular order)

...all of which can be utilised in tandem on any given project.

## *Writing*

Clear written communication that guides users through an experience. The right words are a fundamental part of any end user experience.

## *Service design*

High-altitude understanding of all parts that go into delivering a service, co-ordinated to support user journeys.

## *Prototyping*

Quickly simulating proposed designs in order to better judge their user experience.

## *Front-end*

Strong understanding of the raw materials of modern web applications, underlying technologies and the ability to contribute where needed (HTML, CSS, JS, Vue).

(Also in no particular order)

Additionally, I'm actively building credibility across five key leadership attributes.

## *Communication*

Effectively articulating ideas, strategies, and feedback, fostering clear and open dialogue within the team and with stakeholders.

## *Visioning*

Guiding the team towards crafting a compelling and coherent vision that aligns with business goals and inspires innovative design solutions.

## *Decision making*

Guiding the team towards crafting a compelling and coherent vision that aligns with business goals and inspires innovative design solutions.

## *Building trust*

Cultivating a culture of reliability, inclusivity and integrity, empowering the teams to take measured risks and collaborate confidently.

## *Mentoring and coaching*

Providing personalised guidance and support, nurturing team members' professional growth and enhancing their design capabilities.



Most recently, I've been designing at *Piclo*, an EnTech startup on a mission to decarbonise the world's electricity grids.

I joined Piclo as a **Product Designer** when the business was less than 15 people, and contributed in both an IC and management capacity, including implementing a baseline design culture and helping to grow the function from 2 to 7, around 9% of the total headcount.

In 2022 I was **promoted to Lead Designer**, with a remit including the 0-1 development of new product lines, as well as leading the team's efforts to grow and formalise our fledgling design system, 'Spark', and setting the team on the path to achieving and maintaining AA accessibility standards.



*February 2020*  
Joined as a **Product Designer**



*Early 2022*  
Promoted to **Lead Designer**



*June 2024*  
**Departed** after opting for voluntary redundancy.

Happy to talk openly about this.

While at Piclo, I was fortunate to have had an impact in many areas.

*£13m*

Lead design activities for the creation of two 0-1 B2B SaaS products from early research through to first launch, one of which is now host to eight figures of value.

*AA* WCAG 2.1

Established working practices and set the baseline for achieving AA accessibility across design and engineering disciplines.

*+5*

Helped grow the design team from 2 to 7, including ensuring the hiring process aligned with company values.

*→ UX*

Helped coach and transition an early-career designer from Visual Design towards their first dedicated UX role.

*Established a foundational design system* including UI library, and ran a company-wide naming contest to productise our output.

*Introduced regular design team ceremonies*, quarterly reviews, and other habits to help the team share knowledge and seek support.

*Helped to standardise product thinking* across the business by introducing a consistent method of framing our work.

*Re-designed and built the marketing site at Piclo.energy*, including establishing content management practices and training the team.

*Co-engineered novel UI solutions*, based on internal stakeholder interviews, to enable product teams to do more.



As mentioned, I worked on the creation of two new B2B SaaS offerings. One of which we called *Piclo Exchange*.

This project involved working across industry to solve for a notable gap in secondary trading within UK energy markets.

I teamed up with Piclo's innovation manager and senior software engineers to research, vision and develop a working prototype aimed at finding **product-market-fit** and demonstrating the first green shoots of **commercial viability**.

It was a bumpy road, we almost got it right, *and then the world changed*, rendering our new prototype moot.

The logo for ofgem, consisting of the lowercase letters 'ofgem' in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.The logo for nationalgrid, consisting of the lowercase letters 'nationalgrid' in a blue, sans-serif font.The logo for UKRI Innovate UK, featuring the letters 'UKRI' in white on a dark blue square background, followed by a purple square, and the text 'Innovate UK' to the right.The logo for the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, featuring the Royal Coat of Arms and the text 'Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy'.

# To provide a bit of (optional) *background*...

Electricity grids have to constantly adapt to the ebb and flow of supply and demand. The ability of a grid to do this is known as 'energy flexibility'.

In the UK, ESO (colloquially referred to as National Grid) is responsible for moving electricity around nationally, as well as monitoring supply and demand in real-time. Regionally, the UK is further divided up into 7 networks that are managed independently by different companies.

These 7 organisations, along with ESO (and overseen by Ofgem) regularly need to procure services from various providers of energy, such as EV battery operators, gas power plants, and the like, in order to meet the ongoing needs of the grid. The type of service required can vary significantly, and so these organisations design markets and supporting processes to procure specific services depending on locational, technical, economic and cyclical needs. Or: what, where, when and 'how much?'

From the energy provider perspective, winning contracts to provide service can be highly lucrative, fuelling growth. Engaging in these markets therefore typically becomes a key pillar of their business strategies.

*However...* with 8 grid operator organisations initialising multiple energy markets across different time cycles, **it very quickly became difficult for energy providers to stay on top of all of the different processes**, platforms and interoperability rules, with some markets requiring deep levels of expertise to see successful outcomes (winning a contract, delivering some MW, and getting paid).

Piclo is on a mission to solve this problem at the macro level across the whole market life cycle, however at the time our ambition was intentionally focussed on a few specific areas where we felt we could have more immediate and strategic impact.

## ...which brings us to the *problem(s)*

Typically, agreements to provide service in to a particular energy market are agreed formally like any other business transaction, in the form of a contract.

Sometimes, energy providers cannot fulfil a contract. Perhaps due to an unforeseen technical fault, or perhaps market conditions have changed rendering the contract commercially unviable.

Sometimes, the contracts may stipulate severe financial penalties for failing to provide service as agreed, and so in the event of being unable to provide service, these organisations try to offload these contracts to other organisations to mitigate against potential losses. Pretty standard stuff.

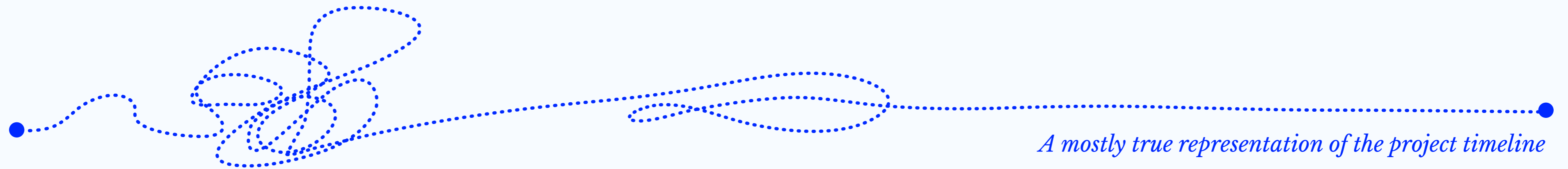
*However*—and this the notable gap mentioned earlier—while most energy market operators provide facilities to transfer a contract, they were not providing any form of facility to promote the **visibility** and **pricing** of these contracts.



This made it very **time consuming** and **challenging** for organisations to offload or source these contracts, **increasing risk** for all parties and creating a visibility black hole for the whole industry.

It's in this area we felt like we could have the biggest impact.

*(We estimated that, in just one market alone, up to £50m worth of contract transfers were occurring annually, with zero visibility, and with lots of friction)*

This project proved to be complex, and the following represents just a *small snapshot* of some of the design activities involved....



 <b>Early discovery</b>	<b>Visioning</b>	<b>Revisions and pivots</b>	 <b>Iterating and launching an MVP</b>
Scenario mapping Vision canvassing Establishing customer archetypes Defining the problem	Rapid prototyping Presenting to industry to seek alignment	Qualitative user interviews Running mock trades Desk research into new product verticals Iterating the prototype	Exploring signposting options Service mapping Lean UI development

# For example...

Early in the project I lead the team through some speculative *scenario mapping*.

## Why?

- To align the team around a common overview of one potential customer journey.
- To surface useful knowledge the team already had and identify gaps.
- Honestly? Mostly because it just felt like a useful method to get things moving.

## Scenario Map — Initiating a STOR transfer: Before, During & After Picloflex

### Persona/Who

**Name:** Sam  
**Role:** Decision maker at Fiat Provider  
**Context:**  
 Sam and team set up a STOR contract with NG, but after doing so realise they need to carry out some maintenance on a key asset several months down the line.

### Usage

Add sticky notes under each column with comments/questions/ideas

- User action or activity
- Use this for comments/facts
- Use this to pose a question/discuss an unknown
- Use this to add an idea

### Prior to using Picloflex

Sam and team work with NG to pre-qualify their assets.  
 Sam and team obtains a Framework Agreement from National Grid.  
 The STOR contract is finalised.  
 Sam learns that an asset needs to receive some maintenance during a STOR window.

What's the difference in the Framework Agreement step vs the next one about Contract?

How does all of this related to a DPS if any?

### Learning about Picloflex

Sam receives (convenient) email from Picloflex detailing STOR contract transfer feature.  
 Interest piqued, Sam clicks out of the email and arrives at landing page.  
 After learning more, customer decides to get involved, and signs in to the platform.

For the trial this step will be largely irrelevant.

We should consider how best to inform our users that a new feature is available.

Do we already do this in some way? e.g. as part of being invited to take part in the trial?

Opportunity for webinar with National Grid to introduce the feature to users.

Do we want a dedicated marketing page detailing this feature?

### Using Picloflex to initiate a STOR transfer

After logging in to Picloflex, Sam sees a prompt to onboard his company for the new markets.  
 Sam decides to give it a try.  
 Sam starts working through the onboarding process.  
 Sam chooses the STOR contract type.  
 Sam is made aware of additional applicable T&Cs and chooses to proceed.  
 Sam ticks a box stating if it is eligible to use STOR.  
 Sam specifies the key dates they need the transfer to be active for.

Need a holistic approach to flagging new things in the product post-sign.

Need to think about product impact — we might need a new home screen.

What should a new home screen contain, if anything?

What things would we need to have in place to help Sam make this decision?

What might this look like? Should we have separate screens for STOR vs PPA vs Other Markets?

Should we automatically log users in as they hit the landing page?

Should we have a dedicated marketing page detailing this feature?

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### Job Stories [WIP]

When I'm <doing something> <feeling something> etc., I want to <do things> <for these things to be true>, so I can <arrive at this outcome>.

When I'm setting up my company to use Picloflex 'Exchange' I want to be able to validate my company's eligibility in as few steps as possible, so I can save time and get started right away.

Should we have a dedicated marketing page detailing this feature?

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### Next steps

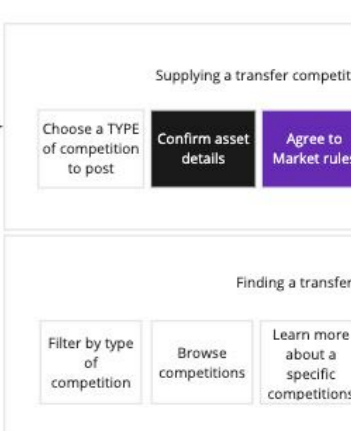
Todo

- Setup session to explore each scenario (if needed)
- If the session is needed, collate and perform some analysis on the output
- Start thinking about more detailed flows + impact on existing product

Doing

Split out core tasks/JTBDs in to separate scenarios

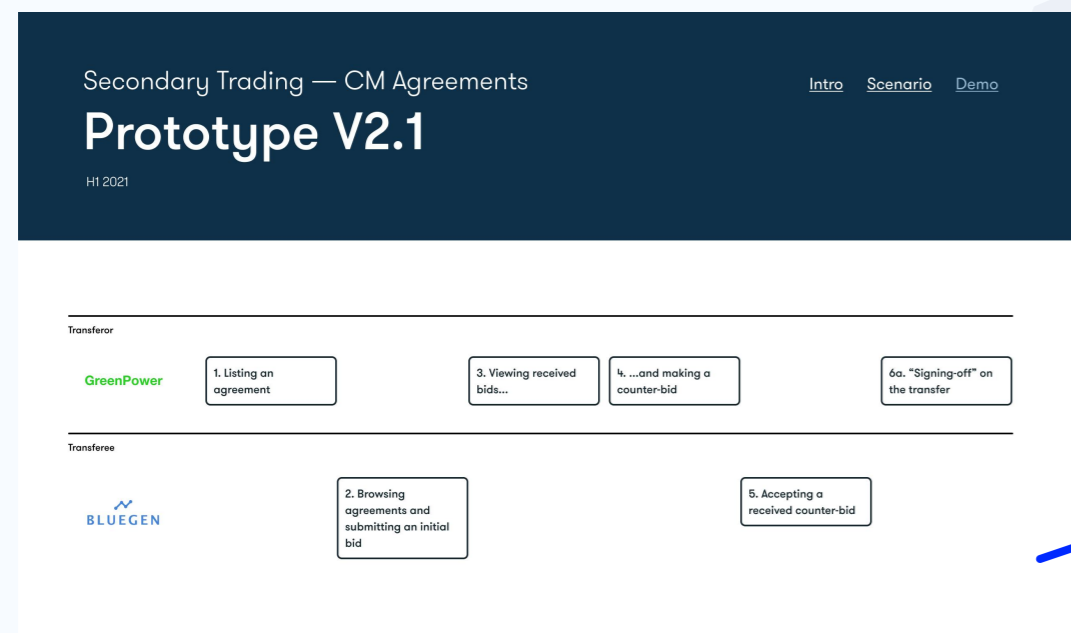
### High level user jobs/tasks (imag)



# At the same time...

In parallel, I started developing *interactive prototypes* in Figma, leveraging the UI and patterns established in our flagship product.

**Why?** We wanted to imagine a future version of the product, which we could use in a *storytelling* context when talking to industry partners, and as a means to start *gathering feedback* from potential customers.



CMU	Trade Capacity (MW)	Type	Delivery year	Trade Period	CP (€/MWh/Year)	Guide Price (€/MWh/Year)	Listing Value	Actions
GreenPower GP10	3.42 of 3.42	T4	2021/22	Full Year	€ 22.50	€ 20.25	€69,255.00	Manage listing
Grid3 Grid3	3.20 of 6.00	T4	2021/22	Full Year	€ 22.50	€ 20.25	€64,800.00	Bid as is Custom bid
Flextricity FLEX003	2.83 of 10.00	T4	2021/22	Full Year	€ 22.50	€ 22.05	€62,401.50	Bid as is Custom bid
Welsh Power WP001	2.00 of 10.00	T4	2021/22	Full Year	€ 22.50	€ 22.50	€45,000.00	Bid as is Custom bid
PeakSEA PKG-A	2.00 of 2.00	T4	2021/22	Full Year	€ 22.50	€ 21.00	€42,000.00	Bid as is Custom bid
SSE SSE	5.5 of 12.3	T4	2021/22	02.02.21 to 06.02.21	€ 22.50	€ 22.50	€30,937.5	Bid as is Custom bid
ConY ConY	6.00 of 6.00	T4	2021/22	01.04.22 to 30.04.22	€ 22.50	€ 22.50	€11,250.00	Bid as is Custom bid
BLUEGEN BG-8	1.00 of 3.00	T4	2021/22	01.11.21 to 30.04.22	€ 22.50	€ 18.00	€9,050.25	Bid as is Custom bid

Exchange

Choose listing to display: GP10

CMU	Trade Capacity (MW)	Type	Delivery year	Trade Period	CP (€/MWh/Year)	Guide Price (€/MWh/Year)	Listing Value	Actions
GreenPower GP10	3.42 of 3.42	T4	2021/22	Full Year	€ 22.50	€ 20.25	€69,255.00	Edit details

Bids requiring action

Received	Capacity	Period	Their Bid	Position	Actions
21.01.21	2.00 MW	2021/22	€ 22.50 kW/yr	Accept Reject Negotiate	
21.01.21	3.43 MW	03.04.2021 to 04.04.2021	€ 22.50 kW/yr	Accept Reject Negotiate	

Bids pending negotiation

Received	Capacity	Period	Their Bid	Best/Final Position	Action
21.01.21	3.42 MW	2021/22	€ 21.50 kW/yr	€ 21.00 kW/yr	Cancel

Agreement data

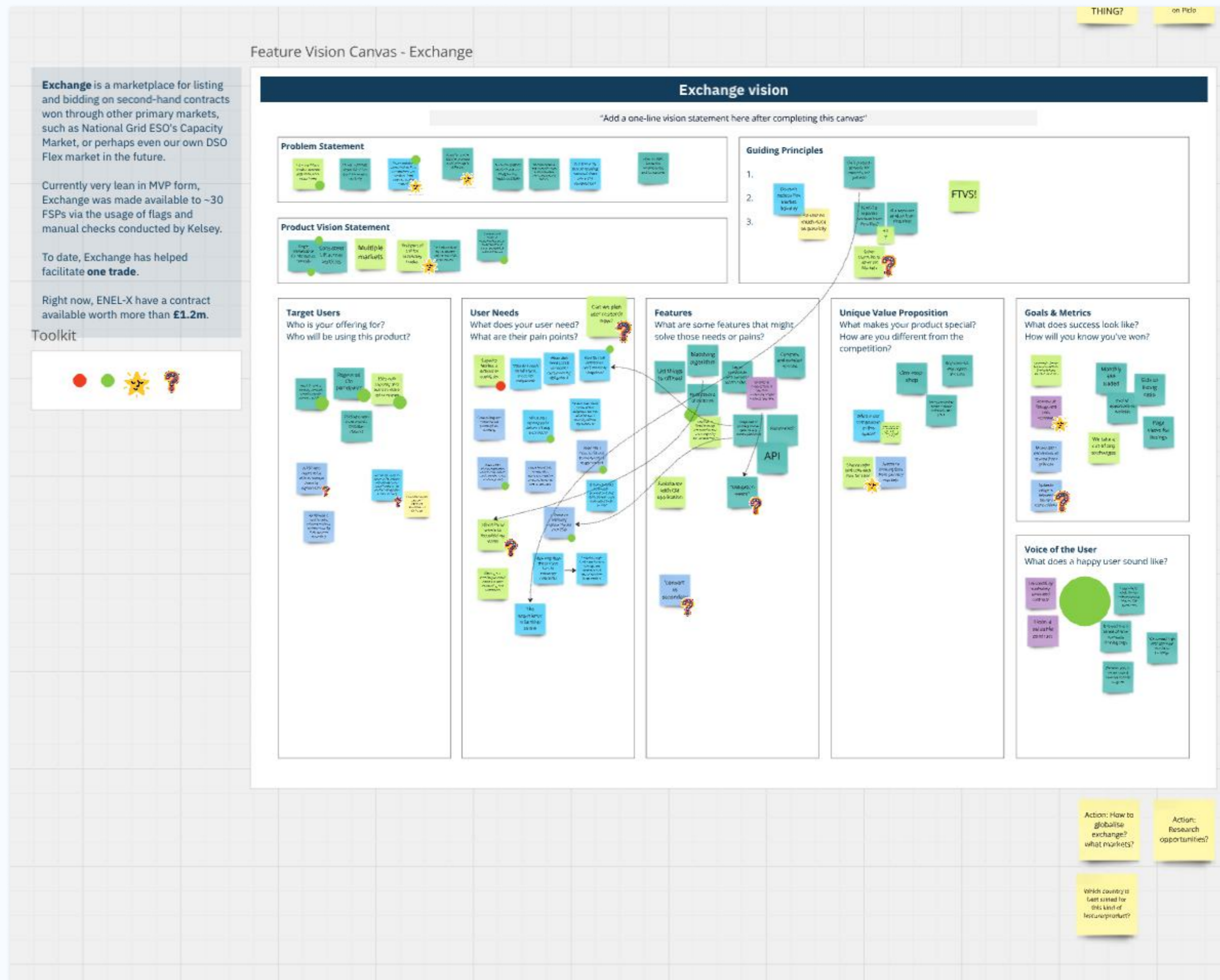
Auction Identifiers		Obligation	
Unique CMU Identifier	109601	Maximum Obligation Period	1
Type	T4	Pre-qualification Status	
Auction	Capacity Auction	Pre-qualification Decision	Pre-qualified
Delivery Year	2021	Opt-out Status	Opt-in
Applicant Data		Opt-out Reason	N/A
Name of Applicant	GreenPower Limited	Connection Capacity Data (MW)	
Agent Name	Unspecified	Connection Capacity / DSR Capacity	4/50
CM Unit Name	GP10		

# Later on...

As the project developed, and we began moving out of the messier early phase, I ran the team through a *vision canvas* exercise.

## Why?

- Align around a more structured and communicable view about what we were building, why, and where we thought we were headed.
- Helped to start identifying potential chunks of work we could later sequence and build in to our roadmap.
- Helped the team start making consistent decision and build momentum.
- Helped to identify assumptions that need validating.



# Eventually...

After several rounds of feedback gathered via qualitative user interviews, we began distilling our prototypes down in to something *lean and shippable quickly*.

## Why?

- We'd built enough confidence in our product conceptually and we wanted to validate product-market-fit.
- Market deadlines and liquidity concerns made our window of opportunity small.
- We'd built relationships with orgs that were excited to use the product and they had contracts ready to go.





# The project wasn't without its *missteps* and *challenges*. but ultimately we *cracked it*.

## *Wrong vertical*

Early on we focused on what we thought was the right market vertical and, as we dug deeper, we realised there were too many technical barriers to facilitating successful trades, so we changed tac to focus on a different market.

This one was on us.

In response, we also devised a better framework to help us assess which verticals made sense for us and which didn't.

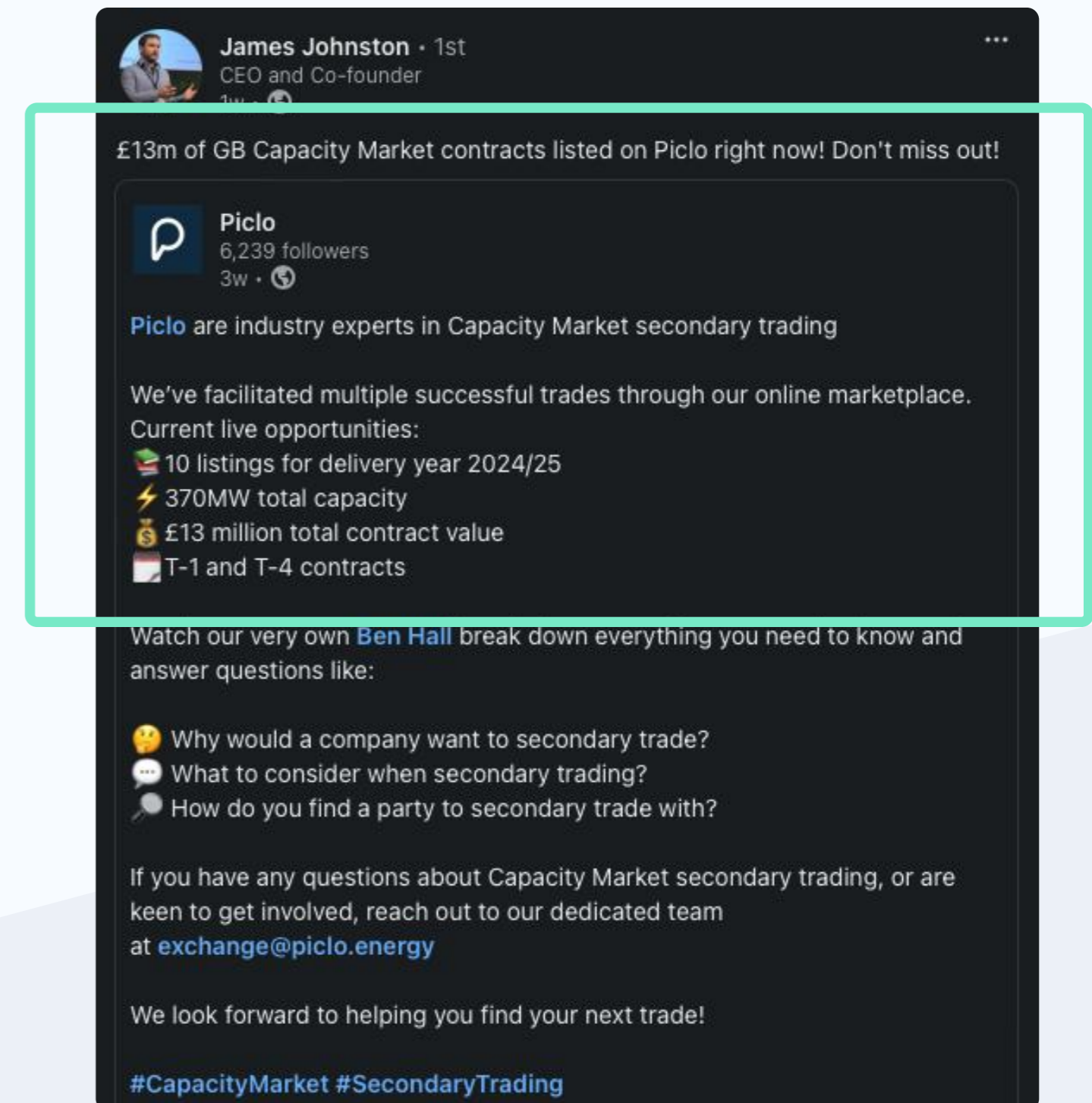
## *Macro-economics (the world changed)*

Russia invaded Ukraine, sending energy prices soaring, which had the impact of locking down a lot of spare capacity in UK energy, meaning liquidity fell to near-zero.

We had to pause the project until things settled, which was around 6 months.

There was nothing we could do about this other than wait.

*We got there eventually...*



But this really only scratches the surface, and I'd happily walk you through the work in *more detail*, alongside any the following work streams\*.

1. **From zero to one** in the UK energy sector... almost... twice;
2. **Design system** foundations;
3. Creating a **UI library from scratch** with Figma and Storybook;
4. Hitting **AA accessibility** standards;
5. Company **website redesign**;
6. Using OOUX and prototyping early to get **robust feedback**;
7. Baselining design culture to **improve maturity**;
8. **Helping designers grow** with a career progression framework.

\*I reserve the right to add more or make this a better list of projects.

# Lastly...

## *My education*

**MSc Digital Art & Technology**  
i-DAT, Plymouth  
2008

**BA (Hons) Graphic Design**  
Arts University College  
Bournemouth  
2005

## *Current inputs*

**Reading**  
The Artist's Way  
Range

**Listening to**  
Decoder  
UX Podcast

**Playing**  
Lies of P (PS5)

**Watching**  
Severance

**Running in**  
Brooks Adrenaline GTS 23

## *What I'm looking for in my next role*

### **Purpose-first**

I'm looking to work for an organisation that is purpose-centric, where the mission is part of the origin story, and not added in later.

### **Flexible, trusting working schedule**

I value being able to pick and choose when and where I work (within reasonable boundaries and aligned to team needs) and I'd like to avoid being tied to an office with high mandatory attendance requirements.

### **Hybrid IC/management role**

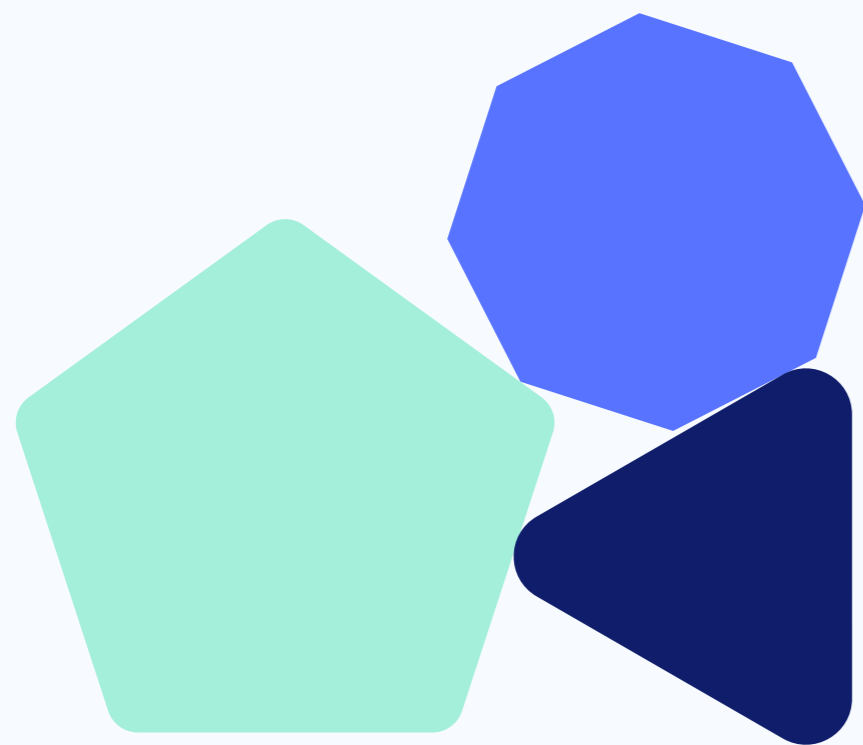
I'm looking to continue developing my skills in both an IC and design leadership context, however I am increasingly becoming more interested in higher-level strategy and mentoring others, so any role I take on must allow room for this kind of development.



London Marathon 2023. I didn't win....but *I did finish* 🏃.

Thanks for reading (or skimming). If you have any questions, let me know.

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**Mike Thomas**, Lead Product Designer

*Let's make the world  
better, **together.***