



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.defra.gov.uk

By Email

Your ref:
Our ref: RFI 5668
Date: 19th August 2013

Dear [REDACTED]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Website Access

Thank you for your request for information about Website Access, which we received on 25th July 2013. As you know, we have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). You asked:

1. Which categories of website are not permitted in your department in line with your acceptable use policy?
2. Please can I get a list of the websites your boundary defences have inspected and blocked (due to their malicious nature) in the six months up to 01 July 2013.

Following careful consideration, we have decided not to disclose some of this information.

The information which can be disclosed is listed below.

Staff are not permitted to access material that is illegal or could reasonably be regarded as offensive, obscene or otherwise inappropriate, e.g. pornography, offensive or harassing statements or language including disparagement of others based on their race, national origins, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or transgender, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, age, disability, religion or belief. Gambling, illegal trading, and any activities that could lead to financial or legal consequences or reputational damage to the Defra Network.

The remainder of the information requested is being withheld as it falls under the exemptions in sections 24(1) and 31(a)(b) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.



In applying these exemptions we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure.

We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosure of information concerning the ability of our boundary defences to inspect and block websites due to their malicious nature.

On the other hand, there is a strong public interest in withholding the information because, for the exemption under s24(1), it would not be in the interest of the UK's national security for Defra to provide details about attacks against our IT systems as this would enable individuals to deduce how successful the UK is in detecting these attacks. Confirming what information is held, particularly on the type of attack, would assist someone in testing the effectiveness of the UK's defences against such attacks.

As any attempt to hack into an IT system is a criminal offence, there is also a strong public interest in withholding the information because, for the exemption under s.31(a)(b), a criminal could deduce if their attacks had been detected or not. For example, if a department responded detailing only a few attacks or only attacks of a certain type a criminal could deduce whether or not they had not been detected. This may enable them to continue their cyber attacks or may damage any attempt to identify them via law enforcement agencies.

Therefore, we have concluded that, in all the circumstances of the case, the information should be withheld.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA, and in keeping with the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on www.gov.uk together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

I attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

I also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me.

Yours

Julie Knapton

Email is.communications@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Annex A

Copyright

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by copyright. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including for private study and non-commercial research, and for any other purpose authorised by an exception in current copyright law. Documents (except photographs or logos) can be also used in the UK without requiring permission for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder.

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Copyright in other documents may rest with a third party. For information about obtaining permission from a third party see the Intellectual Property Office's website.

Annex B

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF