

Quarterly report on open Government Websites (July - September 2014)

Introduction

Government website domains have been procured from as early as the 1990s when there was no requirement upon government departments to retain a formal record of ownership. With staff changes and new departments formed, it became apparent that departments did not have a complete view of all websites in their estate.

The Government Digital Service (GDS) has worked closely with departments to identify legacy websites by carrying out an audit of the complete list of domains managed by Cabinet Office under the second level domain (SLD), gov.uk. This list of domains can be viewed [here](#). As well as websites on this SLD, we found that there are a number of legacy websites owned by departments under a org.uk or co.uk SLD.

Because we do not own these SLDs, information about whether a department has ownership was not easily accessible. However a strong working relationship with departmental leads has helped identify the majority of these sites.

Previously, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) conducted their own rationalisation of MOD and the armed forces' sites. At the beginning of this reporting period, we agreed to include these sites to ensure a consistent approach.

Since the last report of [June 2014](#):

- 10 websites have closed
- 43 websites have transitioned to GOV.UK

The number of central government open websites at the end of this reporting period (July to September) is 367.

As government websites migrate to GOV.UK, GDS in Cabinet Office will become responsible for reporting on that department's content, e.g. Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency - www.gov.uk/government/organisations/driver-and-vehicle-standards-agency.

The GOV.UK website, created and managed by GDS in Cabinet Office,

provides a single point of access to HM Government services in an easily accessible way. GDS works closely with departments to close existing websites and migrate their content, where necessary, to [GOV.UK](#). GDS provides clear, comprehensive management of government websites, ensuring that important data and information becomes available to the public on [GOV.UK](#).

Background

The Cabinet Office committed, in the financial year 2011, to [quarterly publication of the number of open websites](#).

Definition of a website - A website is defined as a separate website if it is active and, either, has (i) a separate domain name; or, (ii) when as a subdomain, the user cannot move freely between the subsite and parent site and there is no family likeness in the design.

In other words, if the user experiences it as a separate site in their normal browsing, search and other activities, it is counted as a separate site.

Definition of a closed website - a website is considered closed when:

- (i) it ceases to be actively funded, run and managed by central government, either by packaging information and putting it in the right place for the intended audience on another website or digital channel; or
- (ii) a third party takes and manages it and bears costs associated with the site.

Where appropriate, domains stay operational in order to redirect users to the [UK Government Website Archive](#). As sites migrate to [GOV.UK](#), the full list of websites to be reported on will be reduced.

Definition of the exemption process - the [GOV.UK](#) exemption process began with a web rationalisation assessment of the government's Internet estate to reduce the number of obsolete websites and to establish the scale of the websites that the government owned. Following this, each department submitted bids for websites they felt should be kept separate from [GOV.UK](#). All exempt sites went through this reporting process.

Exclusions from the central government list

Not included in the number or list are:

- websites of public corporations as listed on the [Office for National Statistics website](#), partnerships more than half-funded by private sector
- charities and national museums
- specialist closed audience functions, such as the BIS Research Councils, BIS Sector Skills Councils and Industrial Training Boards, and the DEFRA Levy Boards and their websites
- public bodies set up by Parliament and reporting directly to the Speaker's Committee and only reporting through a ministerial government department for the purposes of the enactment of legislation (e.g. the Electoral Commission and IPSA).

As agreed in the quarterly report of February 2013, the following sites have been included in the list:

- ['.independent.gov.uk'](#) sites
- national parks

Inclusion under department name

Websites are listed under the relevant departmental name and include sites of independent bodies which have been set up by Parliament.