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for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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Our ref: RFI 7274  
Date: 5 June 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

## REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: 10 MOST VISITED WEBSITES

Thank you for your request for information, which we received on 18 February 2015, about Defra's 10 most visited websites. As you know, we have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). I would like to apologise for the delay in responding to this request for information.

I wish to advise you that the information that you have requested for 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 is not held by Defra or our strategic IT partner, IBM, as IBM only holds such data on a rolling 6 month period. We do hold data for the period from 1 January 2015 and 31 March 2015 based on page views. However, following careful consideration, we have decided not to disclose some of this information.

A copy of the information which can be disclosed is attached within this email in a separate PDF attachment. One website address request is being withheld as it falls under the exemption at section 31(1)(a) of the FOIA, which relates to crime prevention.

In applying this exemption we have had to balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption against the public interest in disclosure. We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosure of information concerning the most visited websites due to the accountability of civil servants and the use of public funds and the need for transparency in the use of Government time.

On the other hand, there is a strong public interest in withholding one of the addresses as its release could potentially be a security risk since it is part of the Department's anti-virus protection. Publishing details of a website that is used to protect Defra's IT systems from attack could lead to targeted attacks from malicious viruses. Therefore, we have concluded that, in all the circumstances of the case, the information should be withheld.

Accuracy of the data supplied cannot be guaranteed as some sites utilise an auto refresh tool which keeps reloading elements of a page, without the user having to click the reload button. Please also be aware that these figures may not readily indicate the volume of Internet usage in terms of activity for some websites for the following reasons: a user may visit a website once but generate a number of "views" and/or "sessions" while connected (even if not active) according to the design of that website; a user may access a site that contains optional or automatic links to another, others or other 'pop-up' arrangements, which are recorded as views or sessions without active connection linking, redirection or



active connection to websites that are inaccessible from the Defra Network under Internet access management arrangements will nevertheless be recorded in this dataset depending on the design of some websites; and, some views of what might be regarded as the same website may be recorded under different entries.

Information disclosed in response to this FOIA request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA and the government's Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

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 the address below.

Yours sincerely,

██████████

**Information Rights Team**  
[InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@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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## 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 within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to [REDACTED] Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: [requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto: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 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