

Report to:	QSMTM
Report by:	Claire Stephen, Acting Head of Policy and Information (HOPI)
Meeting Date:	26 January 2023
Subject/ Title: (and VC no)	Website Statistics Report Q3 2022-23 committee report (VC 180063)
Attached Papers (title and VC no)	Website Statistics Report Q3 2022-23 VC180063

Purpose of report

1. To report on performance of the Scottish Information Commissioner's website in Q3 of 2022-23.

Recommendation and actions

2. I recommend that:
3. The Senior Management Team (SMT) notes the contents of this report and the attached paper
 - (i) This committee report and attached paper are published in full as set out in the publication section below.

Executive summary

4. The attached document reports on activity on the Commissioner's website during Q3 2022-23.
5. This is the first QSMTM Website Report since the launch of the Commissioner's new website on 7 April 2022. Where relevant for comparison, the report references data from Q1 and Q2 2022-23.
6. The report references issues with the reliability of data available from the previous version of the Commissioner's website, and highlights that data relating to the new website should be consistent and comparable moving forward.
7. The report identifies a slight drop in traffic to the Commissioner's website during Q3 2022-23, when compared to the preceding two quarters. This is not considered to be a significant issue, however, with users being actively encouraged to visit the new website for the first time during Q1 2022-23, and a high-profile recruitment campaign running during Q2 2022-23.
8. The most viewed pages of the website during Q3 2022-23 included the Homepage, 'Briefings and Guidance' pages, and the decisions database. The 'Your Rights' landing page also attracted 870 pageviews across the quarter.

Risk impact

9. The website is the Commissioner's principal communication tool. The risks associated with lack of effective communications are identified within existing risk management mechanisms, and are mitigated by actions set out in our communications planning and strategy tools.

Equalities impact

10. Across 2020-21 work took place to identify and address issues regarding accessibility of the Commissioner's website for as many people as possible, in line with requirements of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. The findings from this work fed into the development and build of the new website.
11. It is noted that not all people in Scotland can or wish to use the internet, and as a result the Commissioner provides information in alternative formats including via the enquiries service, wherever possible.

Privacy impact

12. No new privacy implications arise from this report.

Resources impact

13. The website is currently maintained within planned operational resources, and the content of this report does not in itself give rise to any additional resource impact.

Operational/ strategic plan impact

14. The performance of the Commissioner's website is critical to delivery of several strategic and operational priorities. This report's findings do not highlight any new impacts.

Records management impact (including any key documents actions)

15. None identified.

Consultation and Communication

16. Relevant policy and information officers have been involved in preparation of the report. This report provides detail to the SMT about performance of the Commissioner's website.

Publication

17. I recommend that this committee report and the attached paper are published in full.

Website Statistics Report Q3 2022-23

Background and introduction

1. This report provides data from the Scottish Information Commissioner's website (www.itspublicknowledge.info) for the period from 1 October to 31 December 2022 (Q3 2022-23).
2. This is the first quarterly website report to be produced since the launch of the Commissioner's new website on 7 April 2022. As a result, and where relevant, comment and data from Q1 and Q2 2022-23 is included for comparative purposes.
3. Some data from Q1 (i.e. that covering the period between 1 and 6 April 2022) will relate to the Commissioner's previous website. It should be noted that one of the issues relating to this site was that Google Analytics data for the service appeared unreliable and inconsistent.
4. The difference between elements of reported data over the last full month of our old site and the first full month of our new site is shown in the table below:

Page	March 2022 (old site)	May 2022 (new site)
Users	6,950	2,860
Sessions	10,754	5,253
Pageviews	51,794	16,906
Average time on page	45s	1m27s
Bounce rate	5.18%	46.32%

5. Our new web provider has reported that they are unable to confirm the reason for this disparity without the ability to access and test the behaviour of the old site.
6. We are now confident that, moving forward, we can report consistently on website data into the future.

Visitor numbers and behaviour

7. 7,227 unique users (i.e. individual visitors) visited the website in Q3. This compares to 7,549 in Q2 and 9,766 in Q1 2022-23.
8. It should be noted that Q1 data includes a short period, between April 1 and April 6, where the available data relates to the previous version of the Commissioner's website. As noted above, data relating to the previous site was unreliable and inconsistent.
9. Regardless of this, the data shows a slight decline in sessions and users across Q1-Q3. This decline is also evident when data from 1-6 April is excluded from Q1 reporting, with 8,612 users reported over the Q1 period between 7 April and 30 June 2022.
10. This decline should not be considered to be a cause for concern, however. Indeed, it is to be expected that a higher number of users and sessions would have been a feature following the launch of the new website, given that the new service was promoted widely, and stakeholders were encouraged to visit and explore the resource. During Q2, a high-profile recruitment campaign is also likely to have driven users to the site.
11. Our bounce rate – the percentage of sessions with a single pageview - for Q3 was 49%. Context is important when considering bounce rate: a high bounce rate does not necessarily indicate that content is not meeting user needs – e.g. where a page delivers all the content a person is looking for, the bounce rate will be high. In general, a bounce rate of 55% or lower is a recognised indicator of strong user engagement, so our Q3 bounce rate of 49% is satisfactory.

Visitor numbers and behaviour	Q1 2022-23	Q2 2022-23	Q3 2022-23
Sessions (number of single visits)	18,130	15,230	14,958
Users	9,766	7,549	7,227
Page views	61,265	44,339	45,708
Pages per session	3.38	2.91	3.06
Average session duration	2m53s	2m51s	3m
Bounce rate (% of sessions with a single pageview)	38.35%	46.80%	49.22%

Proportion of new visitors

12. The rate of new and returning¹ visitors to the website varied slightly. We experienced a slightly higher proportion of ‘new’ visitors following the launch of the new website, with this reducing to 73% by Q3.

New visitor v returning visitor	Q1 2022-23	Q2 2022-23	Q3 2022-23
New	75%	70%	73%
Returning (i.e. the user has existing Google analytics cookies)	25%	30%	27%

13. Visitors most commonly accessed the website via search engine, with a directly typed or saved URL the second most common route of access.
14. A referral (or link from another site) was the third most common route of access. In Q3, the main source of referrals was Saltire (the Scottish Government’s intranet), followed by Campaign Master (indicating the referral came via our own newsletter), gov.scot, ScotRail, Citizens’ Advice, whatdotheyknow.com and myjobscotland.gov.uk.
15. We saw a decline in users accessing the website via social media in Q3. This is likely to be partly a result of what was promoted via social media during Q1 and Q2, with social media used heavily during those periods to promote e.g. the new website itself, or specific content, such as the Scottish Government intervention report.

How users access the site	Q1 2022-23	Q2 2022-23	Q3 2022-23
Organic search (i.e. via search engine)	5,121 (50%)	3,384 (42%)	4,069 (54%)
Direct (i.e. URL typed in)	3,261 (32%)	3,130 (39%)	2,799 (37%)
Referral (i.e. link from another site)	1,611 (16%)	1,358 (17%)	634 (8%)
Social (i.e. via social media)	159 (2%)	191 (4%)	76 (1%)
Email	3	11	4

¹ It should be noted that ‘returning’ visitors will only include those returning users who have chosen to accept cookies (and have not cleared their cookies). Likewise, a visitor who access the site via two different devices may be classed as a ‘new’ user on each visit.

(this excludes our own newsletter, where access is recorded under 'referral')	(0%)	(0%)	(0%)
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Content

16. The table below shows the 10 most viewed pages in Q3.

No.	Page	Q3 Pageviews
1	Home	5,608
2	/briefings-and-guidance	3,515
3	/foisa-exemptions	3,418
4	/decisions	2,840
5	/foi-law	1,956
6	/your-rights	870
7	/eir-exceptions	832
8	/response-calculator	803
9	/statistics	713
10	/contact-us	704

17. The top 10 pages are broadly consistent with those featured across the previous two quarters, with some minor variations. Variations include the inclusion of the 'current-vacancies' page in Q2, and the inclusion of pages from the previous version of the website in Q1.

18. Noteworthy pages outside of the top 10 during Q3 included:

Page	Q3 Pageviews
/appeal	678
/current vacancies	409
/2021-22-report	181
/scottish-government-intervention	126
/self-assessment-toolkit	119
/foi-awards-2023	45

19. The top 5 most viewed decisions across the Q3 were:

Decision	Authority	Description	Q3 Pageviews
101/2022	Scottish Ministers	Staff disciplined for drugs, bullying, etc.	63
097/2022	University of Strathclyde	Exam past papers	58
096/2022	Police Scotland	Refusal to confirm or deny	55
169/2017	Keeper of the Registers	Change to a property title	51
102/2022	Police Scotland	Contact between PS and SG regarding the deaths of Lamara Bell and John Yuill	45