

Report to:	QSMTM
Report by:	Erin Gray, Head of Policy and Information (HOPI)
Meeting Date:	3 November 2021
Subject/ Title: (and VC no)	Website Statistics Report Q1 – Q2 2021-22 committee report (VC 159338)
Attached Papers (title and VC no)	Website Statistics Report 2020-21

Purpose of report

- To report on performance of the Scottish Information Commissioner’s website in Q1 – Q2 of 2021-22.

Recommendation and actions

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

Executive summary

- Twice each year traffic and usage of the Scottish Information Commissioner’s (‘the Commissioner’s’) website www.itspublicknowledge.info is reported. This report provides statistics for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021.
- Activity is currently underway to launch a new, phase 1 website for the Commissioner. This report does not address matters relating to this, as these are presented for SMT consideration separately.
- Please note: Q1 – Q2 of 2020-21 included the initial national Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and disruption, and this context should be considered where comparisons are made with that time period throughout this report and the attached paper.

Across the first two quarters of 2021-22, key statistics highlight:

- Overall traffic to the website has increased significantly compared to Q1 and Q2 2020-21 (sessions by 49% and users by 53%). The proportion of new visitors to our website (compared to returning visitors) has increased slightly compared to the same period in previous year, now at 88% compared to 85%.
- The most viewed sections of the website were Home/About Us, FOISA/EIR Briefings, and Making an appeal. The ‘Public authorities’ section has been replaced by ‘Making an appeal’ which has moved up from eighth place previously.
- Traffic to the decisions section of the website has increased significantly compared to the same period last year - unique page views for the decisions database were up by 664%. This is likely due in part to decisions not being updated for part of last year as a result of disruption arising from the pandemic, as well as promotion of decisions via the Commissioner’s newsletter, which began in December 2020 and is proving popular.

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. Activity continues to ensure the Commissioner's website is as compliant as possible, as set out in the relevant Accessibility Statements for the Commissioner's website¹ and statistics portal². This will also be considered as part of 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. Work is underway to develop a new website, and related resources impact is considered in the relevant committee reports about that project.

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 annual detail to the SMT about performance of the Commissioner's website.
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Publication

¹ <https://www.itspublicknowledge.info/home/accessibility.aspx>

² <https://www.itspublicknowledge.info/home/accessibility-stats.aspx>

Committee Report - Item 6: Website

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

Website Statistics Report Q1 – Q2 2021-22

Introduction and key findings

18. This report provides statistics for the Scottish Information Commissioner's website (www.itspublicknowledge.info) for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021.
19. Q1 – Q2 of 2020-21 included the initial national Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and disruption, and this context should be considered where comparisons are made with that time period throughout this report.
20. Overall traffic to the website has increased significantly compared to Q1 and Q2 2020-21 (sessions by 49% and users by 53%). The proportion of new visitors to our website (compared to returning visitors) has increased slightly compared to the same period in previous year, now at 88% compared to 85%.
21. The most viewed sections of the website were Home/About Us, FOISA/EIR Briefings, and Making an appeal. The 'Public authorities' section has been replaced by 'Making an appeal' which has moved up from eighth place previously. An individual authority page (North Lanarkshire Council) has been in the monthly Top 10 pages since August, and has had enough page views to be included in this report – it is likely this relates to search engine optimisation issues with the individual authority, since no specific promotion activity has been conducted by the Commissioner's office in relation to this page.
22. Traffic to the decisions section of the website has increased significantly compared to the same period last year - unique page views for the decisions database were up by 664%. This is likely due in part to decisions not being updated for part of last year as a result of disruption arising from the pandemic, as well as promotion of decisions via the Commissioner's newsletter, which began in December 2020 and is proving popular.

Visitor volumes

23. There were 40,076 unique users (i.e. individual visitors) visiting the website in Q1-Q2. This compares to 24,977 unique users in Q1-Q2 of 2020-21 (an increase of 53%).
24. The number of sessions increased by 49%. Page views increased by 132% and pages per session also increased by 56% compared with the same period in 2020-21.
25. There was a 90% decrease in the overall bounce rate (the number of users leaving after viewing a single page rather than going on to navigate to other pages in the website). The bounce was between 30% and 60% until January 2021 when it decreased significantly to 5.75% and has remained between 4% and 6% since then. The reasons for this change are unknown and being explored – but may relate to functionality updates by the Commissioner's website contractor.

Visitor Volumes	Q1-Q2		% Change
	2020-21	2021-22	
Sessions	40,332	60,048	49%
Users	24,977	40,076	53%
Page views	116,033	269,204	132%
Pages per session	2.88	4.48	56%
Average session duration	00:02:49	00:02:21	-17%
Bounce rate	56%	5.17%	-90%

Proportion of new visitors

26. The rate of new and returning visitors to the website varied slightly. It is unusual for this to change significantly from quarter to quarter, with a maximum variance of 3% over the last few years.

New visitor v returning	Q1-Q2	
	2020-21	2021-22
New	85%	88%
Returning	15%	12%

27. Visitors accessing the website via a direct URL have increased by 7% compared with Q1-Q2 2020-21, as well as an increase in access via referral (35%). These are likely to relate to introduction of the Commissioner’s newsletter since December 2020, which focuses on direct referrals to the Commissioner’s website wherever possible. There has been a decrease in access via organic search (5%).

28. There has been decrease of 49% in users accessing the website via social media in Q1-Q2 in 2021-22, despite an increase in the same period in 2020-21 (60%). Twitter was used heavily to promote the Covid-19 and FOI Information Hub in 2020-21 which may explain the increase, and as this (and fast-changing news relating to changes in FOI law more generally) has reduced, a relative reduction in Twitter referrals to the website is not unexpected.

Visitor Volumes	Q1-Q2		
	2020-21	2021-22	% Change
Organic search	20,291	19,248	-5%
Direct (URL typed in)	17,634	18,954	7%
Referral from somewhere else	1,525	2,065	35%
Social	838	424	-49%
Email	44	48	9%
Total	40,332	40,076	53%

Content

29. The table below shows the 10 most viewed pages in Q1-Q2 2021-22.

No.	Page	Unique Views	Bounce Rate
1	Home	36,791	10%
2	FOISA/EIRs briefings (intro)	18,904	1%
3	Making an appeal	11,795	2%
4	For public authorities (intro)	9,045	2%
5	Law / legislation (intro)	8,583	0%
6	Your rights (intro)	6,788	2%
7	Law / FOISA	6,376	0%
8	About Commissioner	4,684	0%
9	Authority page (NLC)	3,794	1%
10	Contact us	3,687	9%

30. The top 10 pages vary slightly from the same period in 2020-21. However, most notable is the individual authority page for North Lanarkshire Council in at no. 9. This may be explained

by results of Google search on how to contact the Council (3rd result) – which are beyond the Commissioner’s control.

- 31. The decisions database was the 11th most viewed page, up from no. 64 in Q1-Q2 2020-21.
- 32. Traffic to the database has increase significantly – by 664% compared to the same period last year.
- 33. This is likely due in part to the fact that there were no decisions published between April and August 2020 as a result of disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Regular publication of decisions resumed in full from September 2020, and have been promoted by via the Commissioner’s newsletter since December 2020.

	Q1 – Q2		
	2020-21	2021-22	% change
Decisions Database – unique views	479	3,659	664%