

Naming and registering websites and social media channels

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This guidance is for government e-communicators, Internet Service Providers and those interested in registering government domain names. This document contains the eligibility rules governing .gov.uk registrations. It sets out the information required for a successful application, the naming conventions that must be complied with and the conditions of use.

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Introduction

This guide sets out the national rules and principles for registering and managing government domain names.

Follow the steps:

1. Be aware of the conditions of use for a .gov.uk name.
2. Determine if you qualify to register a domain name.
3. Review the naming conventions and ensure that your proposed name complies.
4. Review the information required to successfully apply for a registration.

These guidelines apply to all new requests for registration. Some domain names were registered before these current rules were published. Such names should be regarded as exceptional, and not as setting a precedent.

Domain names are not automatically issued and not on a first come first served basis.

Follow the procedure on the JANET website to [apply for a new domain name](#).¹

If you have any questions about these rules or specific candidate names direct them to naming@coi.gsi.gov.uk. Applications for registration **must not** be sent to this email address.

Background to .gov.uk

The global system of internet domain names exists to make internet services more accessible for ordinary users. A set of addresses ending in .uk has been created for organizations and individuals who want to publish material associated with the United Kingdom. Within this .uk domain, called a Top Level Domain (TLD), a set of addresses, called Second Level Domains (SLD), has been reserved for use by the public sector. These include .gov.uk, .mod.uk, .nhs.uk, judiciary.uk and .police.uk. These are administered as follows:

- **.gov.uk** - the Digital Policy team at COI through the Naming and Approvals Committee is responsible for maintaining this guidance which acts as the policy governing the SLD. JANET(UK) administers the SLD on behalf of COI, providing the name submission, name modification, approval and registration systems.
- **.mod.uk** (and .mil.uk) – these SLDs are reserved exclusively for the Ministry of Defence and the UK Armed Forces. Ministry of Defence

¹ New requests for .gov.uk domain name

<http://www.ja.net/services/connections/domain/registering-gov/gov-procedure.html>

domains should follow the guidelines for .gov.uk domains, for example in [Naming Strategy](#). Further queries should be directed to the Defence Interoperable Network Services Authority (DINSA):

E-Mail: DESISSSolsDINSARegistration@mod.uk
Telephone: 01225 81 3657

- **.nhs.uk** – this SLD is reserved exclusively for NHS organisations and services within the UK. It is administered by [NHS Connecting for Health](#)²
- **.judiciary.uk** – the Digital Policy team at COI through the Naming and Approvals Committee is responsible for maintaining this guidance which acts as the policy governing the SLD. JANET(UK) administers the SLD on behalf of COI, providing the name submission, name modification, approval and registration systems.
- **.police.uk** – this SLD is reserved exclusively for UK police services and organisations. The registry (operating and administering authority) is the Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO) www.pito.org.uk/index.htm

Naming and approvals process

The Naming and Approvals Committee (hereafter, the Committee) consists of representatives from the following sectors:

- central government
- local government
- the devolved administrations
- government security
- Ministry of Defence
- JANET (UK)

To request a new domain name:

- The Internet Service Provider (ISP) representing the organisation submits an [application on the JANET\(UK\) website](#).³
- The Committee assesses the application against the criteria set out in this document.
- Within 5 working days, a decision is communicated to the ISP, either an approval or a rejection with the accompanying reason.

At any time following the rejection of a request, an organisation may appeal the Committee's decision.

² NHS Connecting for Health - <http://www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/systemsandservices/addressing/domainnames>

³ Form for requesting a .gov.uk domain name <http://www.ja.net/gov-uk-request-form>

To appeal the decision:

- The ISP representing the organisation provides JANET(UK) with the extra information that should taken into account.
- The Committee assesses the appeal in light of the new information provided.
- Within 5 working days, a final decision on the application is communicated to the ISP, either an approval or a rejection with the accompanying reason.

[More about appealing against the decision to reject your application](#)

The Committee meets bi-annually to review this guidance and to discuss any matters arising. [Details of membership, meeting agendas and minutes](#)⁴ are available on the COI website.

⁴ .gov.uk Naming and Approvals Committee <http://www.coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=209>

The conditions of use for a .gov.uk name

1. There are conditions and conventions attached to the .gov.uk domain and the following paragraphs are intended to guide you on acceptable use of that name.
2. The applications (Web, email, etc) using a .gov.uk domain name must comply with current UK legislation and support channels that provide accessibility for disabled people, members of ethnic minorities and those at risk of social/digital exclusion. Legislation includes Copyright, Data Protection Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Welsh Language Act. Specifically, all public sector websites must comply with COI guidance⁵.
3. The minimum level of accessibility for government websites is Level Double-A of the [W3C guidelines](#)⁶. Websites owned by central government departments must have plans in place by December 2008 and satisfy this requirement by December 2009, as set out in [Delivering inclusive websites \(TG102\)](#)⁷. New websites must comply immediately from issue of TG102.
4. Website code (markup and style-sheets) must validate with respect to its selected vocabularies (e.g. XHTML 1.0 and CSS 2.0). The importance of this is highlighted in [Minimum technical standards \(TG109\)](#)⁸.
5. The acceptance of the name is conditional on that name being used specifically and exclusively for the organisation on whose behalf it is registered. The Committee expects that the use of an approved domain name on a web server will lead directly to the home page for that organisation and not to that of its ISP/hosting service or any other agent, particularly a page on a non-public sector domain. Abuse of this principle will result in the name being withdrawn.
6. In practice this means that if you have a .gov.uk domain name it should be your principal domain name and not as a redirect to a non-public sector domain (eg, .co.uk, .org.uk, .info, .com). Of course the protective registration of a name in other Top Level and Second Level Domains that redirects to your .gov.uk name is common and the accepted practice.
7. Having a .gov.uk domain name means you (the Registrant) have exclusive right to its use. Your organisation does not own the domain name outright; periodical renewals have to be undertaken to retain the right to use it.

⁵ <http://coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=188>

⁶ W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0 <http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG10/>

⁷ Delivering inclusive websites (TG102) <http://www.coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=129>

⁸ Minimum technical standards (TG109) <http://www.coi.gov.uk/guidance.php?page=176>

8. If after registration the original status of your organisation or project changes to, for example, charity, voluntary or commercial status, then your eligibility for a .gov.uk address ceases. You must inform us at naming@coi.gsi.gov.uk and negotiate a timescale for termination of the name.
9. Protectively marked information must not be published under your domain name, unless release of the information is under Freedom of Information.
10. A registration fee is paid by your ISP to JANET. This covers a period of two years, after which a renewal fee is payable for each subsequent two year period.
11. Registering a domain name does not mean that it is automatically a trademark. Refer to the Patents Office website at www.patent.gov.uk/about/ippd/issues/domain.htm
12. When your website goes live you must inform the .gov.uk Naming and Approvals Committee directly by email to naming@coi.gsi.gov.uk confirming (a) the .gov.uk URL of your home page, (b) the date that it went live as a public website, and (c) confirm that your website complies with and will continue to comply with all mandatory standards. Failure to comply with this may result in the name being withdrawn.
13. It is recommended the managers of individual .gov.uk domain names establish and maintain a generic website team email address, for example, webteam@***.gov.uk or postmaster@***.gov.uk.
14. Central government departments, executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies must follow the Transformational Government strategy. You need to satisfy ministers and Directors of Communications that you have complied with the overall policy for government websites. No new .gov.uk domains will be permitted unless approved by the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Public Engagement and the Delivery of Services DA(PED). In general, this means the use of audience-specific channels (e.g. Directgov, Businesslink.gov.uk, workforce channels etc.) and corporate websites.

Eligibility

15. To preserve the integrity of the .gov.uk namespace, registration/ownership is limited to:

- UK government and devolved administration departments and agencies;
- executive and advisory non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs); and
- local and regional government bodies (including town and parish councils).

16. The following are not eligible for a .gov.uk domain:

- individuals (included elected representatives);
- associations representing public sector staff;
- public sector pension funds;
- standalone 'arms length organisations' where staff are not public servants, eg, they are employees of a private or public company;
- charitable, voluntary and privately owned organisations;
- companies and organisations registered by [Companies House](#)⁹ that is, private companies (limited by shares or guarantee), private unlimited companies and public liability companies;
- public, privately owned or charitable organisations undertaking work or programmes within the public sector;
- public, privately owned or charitable organisations undertaking work or programmes targeting the public sector;
- internet management and network related companies, including Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and hosting companies;
- [British overseas territories and international organisations](#).

Transformational Government

17. As part of the implementation of the Government's Transformational Government Strategy, Ministers have asked Departments, Executive Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies to reduce the overall number of websites they own. Citizen and business facing information will be converged on www.direct.gov.uk and www.businesslink.gov.uk respectively.

18. As a general rule, each Department should have one corporate website for information that relates to the workings of the Department (eg. Policy, Ministerial and PSA targets) and should use Directgov and businesslink.gov.uk for customer information, self-service transactions and campaign support.

19. No new websites will be permitted for Departments, Executive Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies unless approved by DA(PED).

⁹ Companies House <http://www.companies-house.gov.uk/>

20. You are strongly advised to consult your Director responsible for website rationalisation (e.g. Director of Communications, Director of Information etc.) regarding exceptions to the above guidelines. Failing this, contact the **Director of Digital Policy at COI** via transformationalgovernment@coi.gsi.gov.uk.

Naming strategy

21. Organisations with, or planning to have, an Internet presence should adopt and exercise a centralised approach to planning the acquisition, management and use of appropriate domain names. A domain name is intellectual property and has both financial and strategic value.
22. Central government bodies must use the appropriate name within **.gov.uk** as their primary domain. Use of non-government domains (e.g. **.co.uk**, **.org.uk**, **.org** etc.) must only be for defensive purposes and must be redirected to the primary government domain.
23. Domain names must not point to anything other than your organisation's home page on the **.gov.uk** domain or to your home page if it is held on one of the other public sector domains.

Naming principles for central government departments

24. Government URLs can be confusing, inconsistent and not easily guessable by members of the public. With machinery of government changes, URLs can become difficult to manage. The following set of principles:
 - define what government URLs should be;
 - help people to get what they expect when they type an address into a browser; and
 - help government organisations prepare for change by requesting the appropriate **.gov.uk** URLs in advance.
25. In line with this guidance, suggested names will be proposed by the Cabinet Office; where Departments wish to have an alternative this should be discussed with the Director of Digital Policy at COI via transformationalgovernment@coi.gsi.gov.uk.

Use real words

26. To improve readability, URLs should use real words rather than abbreviations or acronyms. Hyphens and underscored spaces should not be used. Existing examples include www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk and www.justice.gov.uk. (Note that the guidance for local government permits the use of hyphens to describe the type of organisation e.g. '-tc' for town councils and '-pc' for parish councils.)

Describe the primary purpose

27. URLs should describe the primary purpose of the website or its primary focus so that users know what to expect from the website. Examples include www.communities.gov.uk and www.culture.gov.uk.

Be consistent with existing naming conventions

28. Where there are several acceptable alternatives, preference should be given to a URL consistent with existing ones so that it is easier to remember. For example www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk is consistent with www.homeoffice.gov.uk and www.ofsted.gov.uk is consistent with www.ofgem.gov.uk.

Use commonly known or brand names

29. Where an organisation is commonly known by a particular acronym or brand name, use that as the primary URL because it will be easier to remember. Brand names should be used particularly where the real word URL is long or unwieldy. Examples include www.gchq.gov.uk and www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Strip out unnecessary words

30. Where an organisation name contains frequently used words such as prepositions or conjunctions, these may be stripped out for simplicity. Examples include www.nationalschool.gov.uk and www.commonleader.gov.uk.

Use short URLs

31. URLs should be short so that they are easy to type and therefore reduce human error. Shortened forms such as acronyms and abbreviations are preferred where the alternative real word form is unwieldy. Examples include www.ecgd.gov.uk and www.dfid.gov.uk.

Use sayable URLs

32. URLs should be 'sayable' or easy to say so that they are easily understood when communicated verbally and to reduce human error. In particular, avoid the use of hyphens or underscores in URLs. (Note that the guidance for local government permits the use of hyphens to describe the type of organisation e.g. '-tc' for town councils and '-pc' for parish councils.)

Name handles in social media services

33. Many departments run associated digital channels using social media tools, for video (e.g. YouTube) and short messages (e.g. Twitter). These also have name handles for which some consistency both with the Department's website URL and across departments would help the citizen.

Use of third party services – corporate services

34. Microblogging, photo- and video-sharing and other social media services take the name of the host channel for the URL and then should use the preferred form of the Department URL and add govuk onto the end. For example: www.twitter.com/transportgovuk (with the hashtag #transportgovuk); www.flickr.com/photos/dcsfgovuk; www.youtube.com/bisgovuk.

Use of third party services – team engagement

35. Microblogging, photo- and video-sharing and other social media take the name of the host channel for the URL and then should use the preferred form of the team or initiative and add govuk onto the end.

Use of corporate website for social media communication – corporate services

36. Where a departmental blog or other social media service is hosted on the departmental site the blog should take the preferred use form of the URL incorporating blog. For example <http://www.fco.gov.uk/blogs>.

Use of corporate website for social media communication – team engagement

37. Where a campaign, policy or initiative blog or other social media service is hosted on the departmental site the blog should take the preferred use form of the URL and add the team blog name. For example www.coi.gov.uk/blogs/digigov.

Defensive registration

38. As part of a defensive strategy, you should consider registering other, closely related domain names, for example, generic top-level domains (gTLDs) – .com, .org, .info and in the .uk second level domains (SLDs) – .co.uk, .org.uk.
39. The objective of defensive registration is risk management – to avoid or reduce occurrences of:
- **typosquatting** (common misspellings of your domain name);
 - **cybersquatting** (registration of domain names reflecting or similar to the names of existing organisations with the intention of selling the names back to you or for using them for bad faith purposes); or
 - **cybersmearing** (where anonymous authors set up web sites that spread alternative, false or disparaging information).

Directories and sub-domains

40. Departmental, agency, regional and local authority departments, branches, services, initiatives, projects and microsites, should be treated as top-level-directories of their parent or sponsoring body. For example, when agency and NDPB websites are moved to their parent department's site, it will be expected that they have the form **[domain/NDPB]**, such as www.berr.gov.uk/csr
41. Part of the goal of Transformational Government is shared infrastructure. New infrastructures that support all of the required functionality should be developed in preference to use of sub-domains.

42. The use of sub-domains (e.g. petitions.pm.gov.uk) is not preferable and should only be used for the following reasons:
- they are corporate extranet sites aimed at specific stakeholder audiences, usually under password control (e.g. eProcurement, transfer of data from frontline bodies or suppliers to the centre etc.) and technical reasons force the use of a sub-domain;
 - the sub-domain is forced for a temporary period because of technical reasons where the website does not provide the functionality yet;
 - the delivery of a Web Service where this is temporarily unable to be fully integrated ('white-labelling').

However, the advertised URL should be of sub-directory form that then forwards on to the sub-domain.

Communicating URLs

43. The preferred case is always to use the **[domain/top-level-directory]** for example www.direct.gov.uk/actonCO2
44. It is acceptable and some organisations may find it preferable to drop the www for marketing purposes (e.g. direct.gov.uk). If so, this should work when entered into a browser address box ('resolve').
45. However, the domain name with www in front (e.g. www.direct.gov.uk) must work as an address. The form with www should be used as the preferred Unique Resource Identifier and cited as links in official documents.
46. Sub-domain URLs should never be marketed or advertised.

Campaigns

47. Taking the above guidance, campaigns should be advertised using the form without the www. and with a top-level-directory, e.g. direct.gov.uk/studentfinance
48. However, references and citations in official documents should use the form www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance
49. The use of different levels of directories and sub-directories in the construction of the website will result in the URL becoming longer or shorter. The naming of directories should therefore be carefully considered. For example, your top-level directories may reflect organisational brands, projects or the editorial focus of the website. They should also be unambiguous when spoken and easy to type. As with domain names, there

is a need to avoid infringing trademarks and third party business names. Using the names of well-known people may also present difficulties.

50. The use of sub-sub-directories should be avoided in campaigns and marketing material, for example [**domain/team/project**].

Using sub-domains of GSi

51. The Government Secure intranet (GSi) is managed by OGCbuying.solutions. An application for an approved GSi name must be routed through your local ICT staff. General queries can be directed to the GSi Team at gsi@ogcbs.gsi.gov.uk

Naming Conventions

52. Names must not imply a national (UK-wide) activity when in reality it is focused on or limited to a regional/geographic responsibility or activity.
53. Names must reflect the legal name or registered 'trading name' of your organisation.
54. Names should minimise risk of confusion with similar organisations, geographic areas or similar registered names and avoid the risk of inadvertent masquerading.
55. Generic names should be avoided for local, regional or intradepartmental initiatives, and used only for genuinely pan-governmental activities sponsored by the Prime Minister's Office or the Cabinet Office.
56. Domain names must:
 - contain only standard ASCII alpha numeric characters A to Z; numerals 0 to 9 and/or hyphens;
 - not begin or end with a hyphen (-);
 - not coincide with internet protocols, such as, www, ftp, dns, whois;
 - not include postal codes, or pseudo abbreviations, such as, ltd, plc, gov;
 - not contain more than 64 characters.
57. One and two letter domain names will not normally be used. Exceptionally they may be permitted for generic online services which are intended to apply to all of government or the .gov.uk community and for which a very short domain name is essential for end-user convenience. Exceptions will require the personal approval of the Director for Digital Engagement on behalf of the Permanent Secretary, Government Communications and the Government CIO.
58. Internationalised Domain Names are currently not supported. Where names contain letters that cannot be reproduced in standard ASCII, the conventionally accepted spelling should be used.
59. When registering any name you should be aware of the need to avoid infringing existing trademarks, trade names and third party business names. These can sometimes mistakenly be used as generic terms. Apart from giving unnecessary publicity there is a risk of it being illegal. Where a trade name, trademark or business name is to be used then written proof of your authority to use the name or mark must be submitted. It may be useful to

check the [UK Intellectual Property Office](#)¹⁰ and the searchable [Company Names Index](#)¹¹ from Companies House.

Using abbreviations or acronyms

60. A small number of three and four letter acronyms may be considered as 'household names', for example, BBC, HSE, ITV, OFCOM, No10, However, to the broad majority of users acronyms are meaningless. Web managers should favour a user-centred approach and register accordingly. For example, host names like education.gov.uk, environment.gov.uk and defence.gov.uk may be considered intuitive and unambiguous to a general user.
61. Three and four letter abbreviations or acronyms should only be used if:
- the domain name owner is a central Department of State (for example FCO); or
 - the domain name owner is a central government body that is generally known by that abbreviation within the public sector, and to the wider public (for example MOD, NHS); or
 - it can be shown that there is no reasonable and meaningful alternative.
62. Local government bodies should avoid using initials, wherever possible, as these are generally reserved for central government.

Reserved names

63. To reduce risk of public confusion the Committee has reserved some names and expressions for specific use. A copy of the current list is available on email request to – naming@coi.gsi.gov.uk

Use of unapproved names

64. You must not use a .gov.uk domain name on promotional material, printed material or other media until it has been correctly applied for and formal approval given by the Committee.
65. The Committee will **not** be responsible for any project costs incurred by breaching this rule. Failure to secure approval prior to printing or communication errors is not a ground for appeal if the name is rejected. Project teams and their Internet Service Providers must ensure that approval is secured before authorising the use of a name. If a typographic error is made on promotional material the use of a temporary domain name may be approved for use until the error is corrected.

¹⁰ UK Intellectual Property Office <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/>

¹¹ WebCheck – Select and Access Company Information <http://wck2.companieshouse.gov.uk/>

British overseas territories and International organisations

66. In order to avoid confusion a number of geographic and geopolitical areas have their own country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD). For example:

- Channel Islands – **.gg** for Guernsey **.je** for Jersey
- Isle of Man – **.im**
- Falkland Islands – **.fk**
- Gibraltar – **.gl**
- South Georgia – **.gs**
- Pitcairn – **.pn**

67. Their administration departments, agencies and associated public sector organisations must not use the **.gov.uk** Second Level Domain.

Using other languages

68. The Welsh Language Board advise that Departments required to provide a service to the public in Wales should, where there is a difference between their English and Wales names, consider registering Welsh language domain names.

69. The use in a domain name of a transliteration of an ethnic minority language must be avoided.

Devolved administrations

70. **Scotland.** Civil Service departments, agencies and services within Scotland, frequently mirror national departments and services in Whitehall. In order to minimise the risk of confusion to the public and to avoid inadvertent masquerading then geographic clarification **must** be considered.

For example: www.transportscotland.gov.uk

71. **Gaelic language** – In accordance with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, departments, councils and agencies providing a service to the public in Scotland may, where there is a difference between their Gaelic and English names, consider registering the Gaelic language equivalent. Applications for Gaelic language domain names must provide, for information, the English language equivalent.

For example: www.gaidhealtachd.gov.uk and www.highland.gov.uk

72. **Northern Ireland.** Civil Service departments and agencies within Northern Ireland are required to use a geographic/regional indicator, for example the suffix '-ni' (with or without the hyphen).

For example: www.niproperty.gov.uk
www.property-ni.gov.uk

73. **Wales.** Domain names should be in English. In order to minimise the risk of confusion and avoid inadvertent masquerading then geographic clarification must be considered by departments, councils and agencies providing a service to the public in Wales.

For example: www.welshhousing.gov.uk
www.housing-wales.gov.uk

74. **Welsh language** – this is the current exception for domain names. Welsh Language Board advise that departments, councils and agencies providing a service to the public in Wales should, where there is a difference between their Welsh and English names, consider registering the Welsh language equivalent. Applications for Welsh language names must include information on the English language equivalent.

For example: www.anglesey.gov.uk and
www.ynysmon.gov.uk

75. Where the full Welsh language title is not used the following **suffixes** may be used (with the hyphen):

- '-cb' Cyngor Bwrdeistref (Borough Council)
- '-cs' Cyngor Sir (County Council)
- '-ct' Cyngor Tref (Town Council)
- '-wcc' Cyngor Cymuned

Local authorities

76. Local authorities generally use the format 'area.gov.uk', unless there is the possibility of confusion with another authority or service (for example, national, devolved, regional, county or city) then geographic clarification will be necessary.

For example: www.berrow-somerset-pc.gov.uk

77. Where districts or towns have the same name then county/geographic clarification is required, for example town-county.gov.uk

• Criminal Justice Boards	‘-cjb’
• Crown Prosecution Services region(s)	‘-cps’
• Digital Interactive Television	‘-tv’
• Educational networks	‘-edunet’
• Electoral Registration Office(r) s	‘-eor’
• Electronic voting	<i>see under prefixes</i>
• Embassies	‘-emb’
• Fire and Rescue Services	‘-fire’ or ‘-frs’
• Government Regional Offices	<i>see under prefixes</i>
• Housing Authority Trusts	‘-hat’
• Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority	‘-ifca’
• Joint Services Units	‘-jsu’
• Learning and Skills Councils	<i>see under prefixes</i>
• Library and Education Boards (Northern Ireland only)	‘-leb’
• Library Services	‘-library or libraries’
• Local Education Authorities	‘-lea’
• Local Government Associations	‘-lga’
• Local Safeguarding Children Boards	‘-lscb’
• Magistrates Court Committees	‘-mcc’
• Magistrates Court Services	‘-mcs’
• Mobile services	‘-mobile’
• Museums	‘-mus’ or ‘museum’ or ‘museums’
• National Park Authorities	‘-npa’
• National Trails	‘-way’
• Parish/Town councils (collective)	‘parishes’
• Passenger Transport Authorities	‘-pta’
• Passenger Transport Executives	‘-pte’
• Police etc (excluding Police Authorities)	‘-police’
• Police Authorities	‘-pa’
• Port Health Authorities	‘-pha’
• Public Health Observatory	‘-pho’
• Prisons	<i>see under prefixes</i>
• Probation and related services	‘-probation’
• Record Offices	‘-ro’
• Scottish Community Councils	‘-scc’
• Sea Fisheries Committees	‘-sfc’ or ‘-seafish’
• Single Non Emergency Number	‘-snen’
• Street Works Registers	‘-swr’
• Valuation Joint Boards	‘-vjb’
• Virtual Private Network/system	‘-vpn’
• Waste Disposal Authorities	‘-wda’

How to apply for a .gov.uk name

Your application for a domain name **must** be submitted through an [approved Internet Service Provider](#) (ISP), who will act as your registration agent with JANET Customer Services, using the [appropriate templates](#).¹²

87. **Accuracy is important.** You need to give your ISP sufficient information as a number of applications are being initially rejected with advice because the applicant has not read the rules, used the wrong template, or supplied misleading or inadequate information.

88. **What does the name represent?** Please provide name of the project, initiative or organisation for which the domain name is being used. This is not necessarily the same as the *domain owner*, which must also be provided.

89. Entries for **Organisational Contact** must be the name/address of the person or contact point designated to receive communications from the Registrar/Committee related to the administration of the domain name. This person must be an employee of the proposed domain name owner.

90. Entries for **ISP Contact** must be name/address of the person or contact point designated to handle hosting issues associated with the domain name. This person must be an employee of the proposed ISP.

Your application must describe your organisation

91. The application will automatically be rejected if the information requested below is not provided,

92. To be considered for a UK government domain name you **must** clearly describe the status of your organisation (as domain owner) and the purpose of the domain name for which you are applying. Include:

- the status of your organisation (for example, central government, executive agency, borough council, parish council);
- the role and objective of your organisation;
- the status of your staff (for example, civil servants, local government officials or employees) ;
- the source of your funding (for example, central taxation, CMF, council tax);

¹² JANET Domain Name Registration: .gov.uk procedure
<http://www.ja.net/services/connections/domain/registering-gov/gov-procedure.html>

- to whom your organisation is accountable (for example, Secretary of State for...).

93. **Purpose of the domain name** – you must outline the primary purpose and planned content of your proposed domain name, for example:

- an information website
- a transactional website
- a campaign website
- an educational website, eg, aimed at children/schools
- a redirect page
- email purposes only

94. Who is the **audience** for your website? You must identify your primary audience (eg, educationalist, pensioners, general public, council tax payers etc).

95. **Using abbreviations within your application.** Not everyone on the Committee may know what your abbreviations stand for. Spell them out when you first use them within your application.

96. The Committee reserves the right to check the details you provide and to contact named individuals about any individual application.

Appealing against rejection of your application

97. If your application is rejected, it will be with advice explaining why the Naming and Approvals Committee has taken this decision.

98. You have the right to appeal against the decision. Your appeal should include new information on why you feel you should have the name you originally requested. Simply repeating your original application is inadequate.

99. [Failure to secure an approved domain name](#) prior to, for example, printing publicity and similar material, is **not** a ground for an appeal.

100. Many applications are rejected because they are made on the wrong template, or inadequate information is supplied. In these cases an appropriate resubmission is required not an appeal.

Using an approved Internet Service Provider (ISP)

101. The .gov.uk domain is not a commercial operation. Its management and registration are centralised, but the COI Naming and Registering Service does not provide advice on who is a suitable ISP. These are commercial activities trading in a competitive environment.

[Details of JANET's approved ISP scheme](#)¹³

[A list of ISPs on JANET's scheme](#)¹⁴

How to make changes to or cancel your .gov.uk name

102. To make changes to your registration such as ownership details or hosting arrangements, the ISP who will be hosting the domain name must request a DNS modification using the template on the JANET website. In addition, you must fax a letter authorising the changes to JANET on 0870 850 2213. [Information regarding changes to a registered domain name](#),¹⁵ including a link to the modification request template, is available on the JANET website.

103. To cancel a registration, the ISP who currently host the domain name must request this via email to naming-admin@ja.net. In addition, you must fax a letter authorising the cancellation to JANET on 0870 8502213. [Information regarding cancelling a domain name](#)¹⁶ is available on the JANET website.

Withdrawal of a .gov.uk name

104. The following summarises conditions that may result in withdrawal of a .gov.uk domain name.

- a. Non-conformance with any of the above principles and practice of the rules and conditions.
- b. Persistent failure to maintain an accessible and functional website. For example, obsolete and de-commissioned domains – where there is persistent delivery of, for example, a code 404 page.

¹³ Approved ISP Membership <http://www.ja.net/services/domain-name-registration/approved-isp-membership.html>

¹⁴ Approved ISP <http://www.ja.net/services/domain-name-registration/approved-isp-membership/a-isp.html>

¹⁵ Modifying DNS Entries for ac.uk and gov.uk Domains <http://www.ja.net/services/domain-name-registration/modify-dns-entries/procedure.html>

¹⁶ Cancelling Registrations <http://www.ja.net/services/domain-name-registration/cancelling-registrations.html>

- c. Persistent failure to meet the minimum technical standards for government websites, including accessibility and coding standards.
- d. Failure to renew the name.
- e. Change of status of the organisation or project that the domain name represents or change of status of the domain name owner. Please contact naming@coi.gsi.gov.uk to negotiate a suitable timescale for withdrawal.

See [Appendix A Process for withdrawal of a .gov.uk name](#)

Appendix A Process for withdrawal of a .gov.uk name

The following is our code of practice on the withdrawal of and right to use a previously approved .gov.uk domain name

- **Renewal not confirmed:**
We assume that all .gov.uk domain owners will wish to renew and be active in ensuring services will be continued. Therefore we restrict the effort we put into chasing an ISP for domain name renewal before using our right to terminate it. We will attempt to obtain confirmation of renewal twice over a 90-day period before withdrawal of the DNS entry.
- **Charges not paid:**
ISPs, upon joining the JANET's Approved ISP Membership Account agree to accept the responsibility to pay their JANET invoices in a timely manner. When registration/modification/renewal charges are not paid within 60 days of the date of the invoice we reserve the right to suspend the DNS entry and within another 30 days withdraw the DNS entry.

Where the ISP has indicated that it is not willing to accept responsibility for the renewal payment then within 60 days we will suspend the DNS and take reasonable steps to contact the named domain owner for instructions on a 'way forward'. If this is also unsuccessful then within another 30 days we will withdraw the DNS entry.

- **Decommissioned or faulty website:**
The minimum number of times and period over which we should attempt checking a domain name (a) for which we have received public complaints about its accessibility or the number of broken links, (b) that consistently appears to be decommissioned and/or (c) delivers nothing to the user, for example, a 404 page, three times over a 90 day period, then the DNS will be withdrawn.
- **Not conforming to the 'principle and practice':**
If a domain name is not conforming with the principle and practice (e.g. it being a commercial ISP holding page), we would attempt checking a minimum of twice over a 60 day period before withdrawing the DNS.
- **Ineligible organisation**
The period of time that a .gov.uk domain name may continue to be used by any organisation or project after undergoing a change of status that makes that organisation or project ineligible for a government domain name should be negotiated with the .gov.uk Naming and Approvals Committee. Around 90 days as a **redirect** to the new domain name before the DNS is withdrawn, should be seen as an average.

Definitions:

1. **Suspension** is taken to mean that the name will be switched off but after appropriate action or payment the domain name can be re-instated (re-delegated), usually with 24-48 hours.
2. **Withdrawn** is taken to mean that the DNS has been removed. To have it restored the registrant has to make a new application that will be subject to the rules and charges current at the time of the new application. This point is particularly important for local authorities where the use of suffixes is now mandated.