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# **Red Tape Challenge**

## **Crowdsourcing Policy – Progress & Lessons Learned**

**Will Cavendish**  
**Cabinet Office**

Director General, Open Public Services  
and Red Tape Challenge

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## The Red Tape Challenge was designed as a cross-Whitehall, crowd-sourcing programme

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- Rolling two year cross-Whitehall, crowd-sourcing programme that aims to **tackle the inherited stock of regulation** (over 21,000 statutory instruments, 10,000 with impact).
- High priority for Prime Minister – who has publically committed to being the first Government to reduce overall burden of regulation.
- Crowd-sourcing website enables businesses and the public to **have their say**, about the burdensome regulation they face, asking for suggestions for improvement.
- So far, **14 themes in website ‘spotlight’** – from sector specific themes such as Retail or Road Transport, to general themes such as Environment or Health and Safety.
- Fast-paced work programme, and significant progress made to date - of **over 1200 regulations** reviewed so far, we have agreed to **scrap or improve well over 50%**.
- This has been achieved through a **vigorous internal challenge process** based on crowd-sourced contributions.
- Comments received on the website provide **key evidence on regulatory burdens**, and are used by Departments in their de-regulatory diagnosis, and by the Red Tape Challenge Team and Ministerial Star Chamber to support the ‘challenge’ process.

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## The website has had decent amount of traffic, though this has varied from theme to theme

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- Over **27,180 comments** on the Red Tape Challenge website and around **500 private submissions** to our inbox.
- Around **284,800 visits**, which amounts to **195,740 absolute unique visitors**, and **979,853 page views**; on average users spend around **4 minutes** on the site.
- Traffic referrals are roughly **40.5% direct traffic**, **40% referring sites** (such as BIS), and **19.5% search engines** (mainly Google).
- **168 countries have visited** our website, including the United States, Australia, Netherlands, Canada, France, Germany and India (who notched up 687 hits).
- Most **popular themes** have been Retail (33% of comments), Equalities (26%), Environment (12%), Road Transport (8%), and Employment-Related Law (8%). Least popular was Energy.
- Around **82% of users identify as commenting on their own behalf** – with around 7% identifying as commenting as a self-employed person, and the rest commenting on behalf of trade unions, employees, large organisations, SMEs, voluntary and community sector, etc.



## There have been many cases where website comments have identified poor regulations; and government has already responded

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### RETAIL

*Martin Allen (27 April):* I have worked in the field of consumer protection and information for 18 yrs and in that time the level of consumer knowledge of rights has remained poor, despite huge effort and awareness campaigns... What is needed is a simplification of the rights and obligations of both businesses and consumers and clear understanding of remedies when things go wrong.

#### Plan:

Replace or simplify more than 12 pieces of overlapping, costly and confusing consumer rights law with a single new piece of legislation

### HOSPITALITY

*Robert Wright (May 15):* The Smoke Free (Signs) Regulations should not apply to B&B Accommodation provided in a private residence as opposed to commercial property. Such signage is unnecessary (everyone knows that smoking is banned) and inappropriate in the setting of a private residence.

#### Plan:

Scrap regulations covering the location and design of no smoking signs

### ROAD TRANSPORT

*Ross Barret (8 June) -* The counterpart paper driving license should be scrapped. All the necessary information could be easily contained on the photocard licence. It acts merely as a bureaucratic block to people trying to do things. There is no 'paper counterpart' to a bank card or passport. This is because it is a totally unnecessary piece of bureaucracy.

#### Plan:

Scrap regulation requiring motorists to hold a paper counterpart to their driving licence by 2015, saving drivers up to £8m

## We have had some successes; RTC has been more sophisticated than previous crowdsourcing efforts

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The RTC website has generated a wealth of evidence on unnecessary regulatory burdens. Crude qualitative feedback from Departments suggests that **around 12% of website comments and 43% of inbox submissions are judged to be useful** (although this varies by theme). The website has...

- enabled a **wider range of people to contribute**, including SMEs and other 'unusual suspects' that traditional consultations do not normally reach;
- **promoted transparency** by allowing individuals to read and explore regulations on the statute book in one user-friendly place;
- provided greater **evidence** (particularly from SMEs) on dealing with these regulations on a day-in, day-out basis;
- helped us **promote the objectives and successes** of the Red Tape Challenge directly to individuals;
- genuinely **driven better and faster decision-making**.

Plus:

- Use of **social media channels** allows followers up to date with progress – and a Twitter feed on the home page (plus a live feed of comments) shows real time activity
- Google Analytics and **website statistics have provided useful insights**
- **Private inbox** for users to e-mail contributions - not everyone wants to be part of a crowd



## But we have learned lessons; and can still do a lot more to make crowdsourcing really take off

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- Be prepared for **organised 'lobbying' campaigns** on particular issues – e.g. Hallmarking; Sunday Trading; cycle racing.
- Website comments are **pre-moderated** – essential to protect against spam and trolling but then users do not immediately see their input appearing on the comment pages.

Fundamental aim of crowdsourcing is to plug into highly distributed knowledge and use this to create new fora for informed debate and policy co-creation. Still want to reach this goal. Our aim is to...

- encourage more **solution-focused debate**, rather than stand-alone comments;
- create online platform where **groups can collaborate** to write their own regulations;
- experiment with future themes using online platforms such as CovertItLive (a **live discussion tool**) to host debates and discussions on particular regulatory burdens;
- look to see how **functionality of the website platform** could be improved – including improving search and navigation features to make the website more user-friendly;
- look to **learn lessons from other crowd-sourcing exercises**, including considering use of competitions and mini-challenges, seeing whether we could make better use of data, and looking at collaborative 'wiki' policy making.

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