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Holyrood's 16m Facebook visits – The Scottish Mail on Sunday, November 25, 2012



By Simon Murphy

MSPs and Holyrood staff clicked on Facebook at work a massive 16 million times in a year.

In some months, more data was downloaded from the social media site than from a server used by the SNP for casework.

The Scottish Mail on Sunday obtained the figures through a Freedom of Information request to the Scottish parliament asking for details of the most popular websites accessed by staff over the past year.

Holyrood computers were used to visit Facebook 16,301,539 times – an average of 45 visits every day for each of the 1,000-strong workforce.

Eben Wilson, of TaxpayerScotland, said: 'The political classes have always been good chatterers but how unproductive is it possible for them to be?

'Taxpayers have every right to be angry at this cacophony of gossip throughout our parliament building. It suggests they really do have nothing much to do but chat.

'Their chatter is a waste of our hardearned money. It's time to cut the whole place down by half and

limit its role. There is little sign of responsible governance in these figures.'

The MoS received a list of the 15 most visited websites for the 12 months to the end of September 2012.

Facebook received 9,631,331 page views over that period. Another URL – static.ak.fbcdn.net – received 6,670,208 page views. This, according to IT experts, is a server used to upload and download Facebook content, such as pictures and videos.

Google, BBC, and Wikipedia were also among the most popular, while the Daily Mail's website received more than 700,000 views in both August and September 2012.

Bryan Glick, editor in chief of Computer Weekly, called the figures 'extraordinary' and questioned whether staff were using Facebook for work-related matters.

'It would be interesting to know where these employees live and whether they have a dodgy broadband connection at home so they're coming into work and uploading pictures onto Facebook from there,' he said.

'Facebook is an increasingly popular way of keeping in touch with people, whether that's personal or professional. But my guess would be that the vast majority of use would be personal and sociable.'

He added: 'It's a pretty extraordinary number for it to be taking place during the working day.'

'Certainly, for anyone in the workplace aged between 20 and 45, Facebook is going to be pretty central to the way they run their social lives these days. It's how they keep in touch with friends and family.'

'The mind-set of a lot of people is that it's as much a part of their life as keeping in touch with people on the phone or email.'

A Scottish parliament spokesman said: 'More than half of all MSPs use Facebook and other social media to engage with constituents and talk about the issues that matter to the people of Scotland.'

'We also use Facebook to promote the annual Festival of Politics and promote exhibitions taking place at Holyrood.'

Published November 25, 2012 & Filed in [The Scottish Mail on Sunday](#)

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