

Subject: Information on forfeit credits on the ScotlandsPeople website.

FOI reference: FOI/19/00166

Date received: 16 January 2019

Date responded: 12 February 2019

Information requested:

With regards the ScotlandsPeople service the following information was requested:

- (a) In each of the last 3 years (fiscal or calendar) how many credits have been forfeited by users due to the two-year validity rule?
- (b) Is this information publicly disclosed in annual reports or similar?
- (c) How is the revenue gained from the forfeited credits treated in accounts for the service i.e. is it included in general revenue, treated as windfall profit, held in reserves?
- (d) How many enquiries or complaints have been received about the forfeiting of credits over the last 3 years (fiscal or calendar)?

NRS Response:

Answers to asked questions have been provided where it was possible to extract the information from our systems. While our aim is to provide information whenever possible, in this instance National Records of Scotland does not have some of the information you have requested.

The reasons why we do not have the information are explained with the response.

(a) In each of the last 3 years (fiscal or calendar) how many credits have been forfeited by users due to the two-year validity rule?

The ScotlandsPeople website re-launched in September 2016. Prior to this date credits that had been un-used within the one year validity period remained in the customer's account and were activated when the customer purchased additional credits. Once credits were purchased, the dormant credits were added to the customer credit balance and all credits given a new one year validity period.

When the website was re-launched in September 2016 the terms and conditions of purchasing credits was changed. The validity period was extended to two years and customers could only have one account per email address. Credits no longer remain dormant in accounts at the end of the two year period. Credits are now removed from customer accounts at the end of the validity period unless additional credits are purchased. If additional credits are purchased then all credits are combined and a new validity period created that is two years from the date of purchase.

All customer accounts and credits both live and dormant were migrated into the relaunched Service in September 2016 and all credits were given a validity period of 2 years from the relaunch date. Customers are send an email advising them that

their credits are about to expire 7 days before the expiry date and a reminder is sent 2 days before the expiry date. This time period is currently under review following customer feedback.

The number of credits that have expired in accounts since the relaunch is detailed below:

1 Sept 2016 to 31 Aug 2017 – 0 expired credits

1 Sept 2017 to 31 August 2018 – 1589 expired credits

1 Sept 2018 to 31 January 2019 – 7,851,631 expired credits

The figure to the end of January 2019 includes all credits that have been purchased since the service first launched in 2002.

(b) Is this information publicly disclosed in annual reports or similar?

This information is not disclosed in annual reports. As a consequence of our accounting policy for ScotlandsPeople income, the expiry of credits is not a financial transaction for National Records of Scotland, as described below.

(c) How is the revenue gained from the forfeited credits treated in accounts for the service i.e. is it included in general revenue, treated as windfall profit, held in reserves?

Our policy for recognising income generated through the ScotlandsPeople service is described on p.72 our Annual Report and Accounts (<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//about-us/NRS-annual-report-and-accounts-2017-18.pdf>). Income is recognised at the time when it is paid and access to documents is granted. Since income is recognised at the time when credits are sold, there is no additional revenue to account for when they expire.

(d) How many enquiries or complaints have been received about the forfeiting of credits over the last 3 years (fiscal or calendar)?

We have received 1,130 enquiries from individual customers in total since mid-September 2018 up to the end of January 2019 in relation to credits expiring. This number includes more general enquiries about the date and time of credit expiry or enquiries from customers with more than one account as well as enquiries about the credit expiry policy.

Up to the end of January 2019, there have been 6 official complaints regarding expiry of credits.

We have provided answers where possible to this FOI request.