

'scot' opens for general availability
United Kingdom - Hogan Lovells LLP

Domain names

October 15 2014

In the wake of the recent referendum on Scottish independence, the [Dot Scot Registry](#) opened the '.scot' new generic top-level domain (gTLD) for general availability on September 23 2014. For a country with a population of just over five million, the TLD racked up an impressive number of registrations on its first day proving that, although the Scottish national spirit may have been dampened by the recent no vote, it remains alive and well.

Although Scots ultimately rejected independence from Britain, they seem to have been less reticent about the '.scot' TLD, with over 4,000 '.scot' domain names being registered on the launch day alone, around 1,500 of those being grabbed in the first 60 seconds alone.

Prior to the outcome of the referendum, '.scot' was being touted as Scotland's *de facto* country-code top-level domain due to the fact that most of the likely contenders for the job ('.sc', '.st' and '.sd') were already allocated to other countries (the Seychelles, Sao Tome and Principe and Sudan). The codes for the country-code extensions are generally drawn from the ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 standard. When a new country is created, a new two-character country-code must also be assigned. Quite how a four-character gTLD would fit into this scheme is a question that, for the time being, will remain unanswered.

The Dot Scot Registry is being run by a not-for-profit company that seeks to provide "an online identity for the worldwide family of Scots". Director of the Dot Scot Registry, Gavin McCutcheon, stated that:

"it is entirely right that Scotland should have its own distinctive and recognisable internet domain, in particular one that will resonate internationally, helping to promote Scottish business and culture throughout the world."

The general availability launch was preceded by the opening of the registry to a group of 'DotScot Pioneers' back in July 2014, that included, according to the registry, "a cross-section of the Scottish community, including businesses both large and small, cultural and voluntary organisations, charities and the public sector". Among the prominent DotScot Pioneers were the Scottish government, a number of referendum campaign groups and the Scottish Scouts.

An indication of the credibility the TLD has accrued was evidenced by Scottish Finance Secretary John Swinney's statement that he was looking forward to 'www.gov.scot' "being adopted in the coming months as the primary web address for the Scottish government".

It will be interesting to see whether the volume of initial registrations under the '.wales' and '.cymru' TLDs rival that of '.scot' when these TLDs open to the general public in March 2015, or whether the initial flurry of '.scot' registrations will ultimately be attributed to the nationalist fervour surrounding the independence referendum. Although there are a number of city TLDs among the first wave of new gTLDs (eg, '.london', '.paris' and '.berlin'), there are far fewer that represent entire regions or ethnic groups in the way that '.scot' and '.cymru' do.

David Taylor and Cindy Mikul, Hogan Lovells LLP, Paris

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