**BPI sends 500 millionth illegal link to Google for removal from search results**

***BPI CEO Geoff Taylor calls for online platforms and intermediaries to become part of the solution, rather than contributing to the problem of online piracy***

*London, 10th March 2020 – for immediate release*

As part of its mission to promote British music, record labels association the BPI supports the legal music market by disrupting the activities of illegal music sites – estimated to cost the UK recorded music sector upwards of £150 million a year1 .

Under one strand of its multi-pronged content protection strategy, which also includes criminal and civil enforcement, legal action to block illegal sites and consumer education (see further below), the BPI sends notices to search engines requesting that they remove search results that direct users to illegal music files on the internet.

Over the weekend, the BPI passed the milestone of the **500 millionth URL** submitted to [Google](https://transparencyreport.google.com/copyright/overview?hl=en_GB) for delisting on behalf of UK artists and labels. The BPI is the world’s second-highest remover of content from Google, and in addition has sent 398 million removal notices to Microsoft for Bing & Yahoo. *The BPI expects to pass one billion total links submitted for removal by search engines during 2020*. In total, over 4.5 billion infringing links have to date been removed from Google by all copyright holders globally.

The removal notices sent by the BPI are targeted at thousands of illegal sites of all types, including P2P torrent sites and trackers, mp3 aggregators, cyberlockers and stream rippers, and they protect the recordings of tens of thousands of artists and labels every year.

In addition to removing the specific illegal links, under a government-brokered *Code of a Practice* that BPI negotiated with Google and Microsoft in 2017, sites that appear repeatedly in notices are demoted by search engines out of search results globally. The combined effect of high-volume notice sending and site demotion has transformed the search results presented to consumers in most cases, ensuring that legal services appear more prominently than before in top search results and that the incidence of illegal sites, and their profile to consumers, is reduced. The BPI strongly welcomes this positive collaboration from search engines, and has been working, with support from Government, to try to persuade social media companies, online marketplaces and the digital advertising industry to put in place similar voluntary collaborative measures, reducing the role their services play in supporting the pirate economy.

Reaching this milestone illustrates vividly that, despite the progress made, the rights of creators continue to be infringed online on an industrial scale. It demonstrates that a new approach is needed to make the internet safer for consumers and fairer for musicians, labels or anyone pursuing a creative career.

**Geoff Taylor, Chief Executive BPI & BRIT Awards**, said:

*“The fact the BPI has had to delist half a billion infringing music links from Google alone, on behalf of UK artists and labels, highlights the staggering scale of the problem of illegal sites, as well as BPI’s unwavering commitment to fighting for the rights of artists and their record labels.*

*”Under a code of practice BPI and MPAA negotiated with search engines in 2017, persistent illegal sites are now regularly demoted out of search results, and together with the legal actions we bring to block illegal sites, this has significantly improved the quality of results presented to consumers.*

*“The collaboration with search engines, including Google, sets a good example for online intermediaries and platforms, which must urgently take on greater responsibility to combat illegal content. Intermediaries such as advertising networks, brands, payment providers, hosting ISPs, domain registries and registrars should “know their customers” and avoid profiteering from piracy through providing business services to illegal sites. Platforms that host content should use available technology to prevent infringements before they occur. These measures should be enforced through a legal duty of care on intermediaries and platforms to take reasonable measures to avoid infringement of others’ rights.*

*”For too long we have accepted a reactive approach that places all the burden on creators to search for and police hundreds of millions of infringements of their rights across the entire internet. That approach cannot succeed. Instead we should expect reasonable, proactive, preventative measures by all online businesses, using technology and good business practices, to sweep the black market to the edges of the internet. This is achievable. All that is required is the political will on the part of platforms – or failing that, Government and regulators – to support creators by actively suppressing the illegal content that destroys careers and throttles the growth of our creative industries.”*

**The BPI’s approach to tacking music piracy**

The BPI takes a multi-pronged approach to the piracy problem, including search delisting, legal actions to close down or block access to illegal sites, working with law enforcement to disrupt revenues streams to bad actors, investigating organised crime, and educating consumers through its participation in CCUK’s [Get it Right (from a Genuine Site)](https://www.getitrightfromagenuinesite.org/) campaign.

The collaboration with search engines is a key element in reducing piracy, as many users find piracy sites through Search, primarily Google. In 2019, the BPI delisted 314,000 titles by 55,000 artists represented by 13,000 labels from over 9,000 pirate sites across torrent trackers, mp3 aggregators, cyberlockers and stream rippers. The majority of titles delisted were on behalf of independent labels. 1,000 of the sites actioned in 2019 were subject to demotion and virtually disappeared from Search, which significantly reduced the amount of traffic they received from both UK and global users.

Since January 2020, the BPI has already delisted 8 million URLs from Google, associated with 170,000 albums and tracks, on behalf of 31,000 artists and 9,000 labels, across 4,000 pirate sites. The BPI expects to reach 1 billion delisted URLs across Google & Bing combined by the end of 2020.

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Notes to Editors

**1** It is estimated by the BPI that over £150m was lost to the music industry through digital and physical piracy combined in 2019. The BPI calculates this figure using its loss estimation model, with web traffic data from ComScore.

**About the BPI** (British Phonographic Industry) – [www.bpi.co.uk](http://www.bpi.co.uk). The BPI champions the UK’s recorded music industry, safeguarding the rights of its members and of the artists, performers and label members of collecting body PPL. The BPI’s membership consists of well over 400 independent labels and the UK’s three ‘majors’, which together account for 85 per cent of legitimate domestic music consumption and 1 in 9 albums sold around the world.

The BPI promotes British music overseas through its trade missions and the *Music Exports Growth Scheme*. It provides insights, training and networking with its free masterclasses, *Innovation Hub*, *Insight Sessions*, *WidsomWednesdays* events, and reports. The BPI administers *The BRIT Certified Awards*, co-owns *The Official Charts*, organises *The BRIT Awards* and *BRITs Week*, and is also home to *The Mercury Prize*.