

MEETING 17 - 5 DECEMBER 2001

POLICY ADVISORY BOARD REPORT
PORTMAN SQUARE, LONDON, W1
5 DECEMBER 2001

Those present:

- Richard Almeida (Chair) Elected Member
- Richard Baron Appointed Member
- Adam Beaumont Elected Member
- Denesh Bhabuta Elected Member
- Mike Blanche Elected Member
- Roy Bisson Appointed Member
- Alex Bligh Appointed Member - Council of Management
- Gordon Dick Elected Member
- Steve Dyer Appointed Member - Council of Management
- Clive Feather Elected Member
- Peter Gradwell Elected Member
- Sue White Appointed Member

From Nominet by invitation of the PAB: Willie Black, Lesley Cowley, Felicity Hoad, Fay Howard, Emily Taylor.

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Eric Ramage and Shirley Wood.

2. Code of Practice

Fay Howard submitted a report including results of the INCOP consultation. The main conclusion was that the majority of those surveyed believed that better standards should be enforced through Nominet's Tag Holder Agreement.

She reported on a meeting with the DTI/OFT that had taken place, at which she had outlined the options available to Nominet, in the interests of enforcing basic standards of good practice.

Some PAB members expressed the importance of INCOP remaining independent of Nominet, and of having the possibility of being adopted by other Registries. Overall it had to deliver an improved service for internet users, including consumers.

The PAB recommended that Nominet enforces its existing Tag Holder Agreement. This recommendation was made in the full knowledge that some members would not welcome Nominet taking a harder line.

3. Application for me.uk

The PAB reviewed the me.uk application that had been received in October and the subsequent executive report.

Lesley Cowley noted that the company behind the application, PDN Limited, were unhappy with the Executive Report and had asked to submit a reply to it, as well as attend the meeting. No report had been received from them in advance of the meeting.

The PAB debated the application that had been submitted by PDN, and reviewed the Executive Report. They agreed that the Executive Report was fair and unbiased. The PAB had no objections in principle to a Third Party running an SLD so long as that Third Party could demonstrate that it satisfied certain minimum objective criteria, as set out in Nominet's SLD Policy and Procedure. The PAB stated that it had an open mind for looking at other options.

The PAB supported the overall intentions expressed by PDN, including the promotion of the regeneration of Liverpool.

However, a number of deficiencies in the application were highlighted. These were that:

- The application did not demonstrate that the applicant was a neutral and impartial body
- The application did not demonstrate sufficient consumer protection provisions in the draft Terms and Conditions
- The application did not demonstrate sufficient evidence of how it would serve the interests of the Internet Community
- The application did not demonstrate that sufficient start-up funding was in place
- The application did not demonstrate a suitable mechanism for stakeholder input
- The application did not demonstrate that the applicant possessed sufficient experience in managing a Registry
- The application did not demonstrate sufficient details on the operation of a Dispute Resolution Service
- The application did detail any mechanism which promoted competition at Registrar level.

A vote was called on the following motions:

- To accept the application: No acceptances, No abstentions, 12 rejections.
- To reject the application: 8 acceptances, 2 abstentions, 2 rejections.
- To return the application to the Executive for further clarification from the applicant: 2 acceptances, 9 abstentions, 1 rejection.

The PAB agreed to reject the application for all the reasons listed above.

It was also agreed that it would be a good opportunity to review the current Policy and Procedure for creating new Second Level Domains, and this would be discussed at the next meeting.

4. Feedback from the CoM on pricing

Willie Black reported that the CoM had had several meetings to discuss the current pricing levels, and had been refining the financial spreadsheets. The CoM had decided to reject the PAB's proposal to increase the fee at the moment, but that this would be discussed again at the April PAB meeting. By April, the Executive would have a better idea of the rate of renewal and have further refined the inputs which make-up the financial forecasts.

5. Rules for me.uk

The Executive tabled the draft Rules for me.uk that were due to go the CoM meeting on 11/12/01 for information.

6. Communications with stakeholders

Gordon Dick tabled a paper on improving communications with stakeholders. He made the general point that there should be more communication with stakeholders. The Executive agreed to make some recommendations for the next meeting.

7. Rules sub committee

Clive Feather tabled several papers from the Rules sub committee which had met since the last meeting. Comments were invited on the papers from other PAB members, and these were to be made to Clive by 14/12/01. A further sub committee meeting may be called before the next full PAB meeting in order to formulate the key recommendations.

8. Tag Changes

The Executive reported that it was seeking legal advice regarding Nominet's status in relation to Tag Changes. Peter Gradwell reported continuing concern from the membership, and requested an update for the next meeting.

9. Updated WHOIS

The Executive confirmed that the WHOIS was due to be expanded to include Registrant name and addresses, however this was unlikely to go live until the new template fields became mandatory on March 1 2001.

The PAB highlighted the need for increased public awareness of the proposed changes. It was also mentioned that Nominet should monitor concurrent developments within ICANN. It was recommended that a copyright disclaimer should be added to the WHOIS output message.

10. Changes to the Template

The PAB discussed the current changes to the Template. As some members had expressed concerns about the additional Registrant fields, a vote was taken on a proposal to make the current fields mandatory.

10 people voted for the motion, 1 against and 1 abstained.

The PAB recommended that the new Registrant fields should be mandatory, but acknowledged that further streamlining and a set of definitions was necessary.

11. Pre-Nominet domains policy

The Executive reported that the pre-Nominet domains were being brought under the current Terms & Conditions on an ad hoc basis. There was a long-term plan to use existing resources to bring over the rest of the pre-Nominet domains over when the schools project had been concluded.

12. Appointed Organisations

Thanks were given to Richard Baron who attended his last meeting. Unfortunately, Richard had been unable to find a replacement at the IoD to take over his appointed position. It was therefore agreed that the Executive should continue to search for a suitable replacement within the IoD, and if none could be found then to approach the CBI, followed by the Chambers of Commerce if necessary.

13. Response to pab-suggest request not to disclose discounted registration fee

The PAB resolved that the £5 fee should be published on the web site, and that Nominet should continue to maintain its policy of openness and fairness for all stakeholders. However, the Executive was asked to clarify the web site text to explain clearly why there is a price differential for members and non-members.

14. Date of Next meeting

The next meeting will be held at 10.00 hours on February 6 2001.