

Interface Changes

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1. Introduction

It has always been the tradition that interface changes, such as adding new fields to the Automaton, are taken to the PAB by the Executive for consultation. This paper proposes an end to that tradition and recommends an alternative method of consulting about planned interface changes.

Interface changes means those changes that affect the way a tag holder's computer systems interface with our computer systems. It is generally taken to mean the structure of data that is sent by a tag holder and the structure of data that is returned.

2. Old method

The old method has been for the Executive to draft the proposals which are then sent to the PAB for consultation via the Board. These can be very technical at times, with detailed explanations of particular technical aspects of the Automaton or other services.

In the course of going to the PAB, the papers are published on the web site and an announcement that these papers are available is sent on the nom-announce list to all subscribing members and tag holders.

Tag holders who wish to comment on the proposals can only do so by contacting a PAB member (generally an elected one) or contacting the executive directly. Sometimes there are attempts to start a discussion on a mailing list such as nom-steer but these tend to be unfocussed.

The proposals are then discussed at the PAB and recommendations made. Because of the technical nature of the proposals the discussion is normally limited to a few of the elected members with the majority of PAB members not participating.

If agreed by the PAB the recommendations are then passed to the Board for formal approval and then on to the Executive to implement. The Executive then builds this into their programme of work.

3. New method

The proposed new method is for the Executive to draft the proposals and then to publish these on the web site and send appropriate announcements about them. The published information will include the timetable for consultation and the means for consultation to take place, normally through an operational working group.

The consultation then takes place directly with any interested tag holders using the nominated forum. At the end of the predetermined period the proposal is possibly amended and either finalised or further consultation is sought.

Once finalised the proposal is then built into the work programme by the Executive.

Board
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Date: 21 June 2005

4. Recommendation

The PAB is asked to consider the following resolution:

“The PAB resolves to recommend the policy change of the Executive no longer bringing interface changes to the PAB and instead the Executive publishing these and consulting directly with tag holders.”