

POLICY ADVISORY BOARD REPORT
ST JAMES'S SQUARE, LONDON, SW1Y
9 November 2005
MEETING 41

Those present:

Tom Adams	Appointed Member - Cabinet Office (e-Government Unit)
Denesh Bhabuta	Elected Member
Alex Bligh	Appointed Member - Nominet Board
James Conaghan	Elected Member
Susan Daley	Appointed Member - CBI
Gordon Dick	Appointed Member - Nominet Board
Clive Feather	Elected Member (co-opted)
Alex Kells	Elected Member
Sebastien Lahtinen	Elected Member (Chair)
Mark Lewis	Appointed Member - Companies House
Hazel Pegg	Elected Member
Eric Ramage	Appointed Member - ITMA
Geoff Smith	Appointed Member - DTI

>From Nominet by invitation of the PAB:

Eleanor Bradley, Director of Operations
Gareth Cook, Communications Executive
Lesley Cowley, Chief Executive
Emily Taylor, Director of Legal and Policy

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from the Earl of Erroll and Jason Johns.

2. Approval of September meeting report

A proposed amendment to a paragraph of the September meeting report had been submitted by James Conaghan, Hazel Pegg and Gordon Dick because it was felt that the previous statement, in isolation could be misconstrued.

It was suggested that the original paragraph:

'Gordon Dick cautioned that the PAB should be careful as a body to remember its role is with regards to recommending policy for the running of the .uk domain and not governance of the company which is a matter for the Board but that is not to say it should not have input into that governance where it is relevant.'

Should be replaced with:

'Gordon Dick cautioned that the PAB should be careful as a body to remember its role is with regards to recommending policy for the running of the .uk domain, including submitting appropriate responses on possible changes of governance, but does not include pro-actively calling for changes to the governance of the company, which is a matter for the Board and the Membership. But that is not to say that the PAB should not have input into changes of governance policy where this is relevant.'

Resolution

The PAB resolved to approve that the amendment be incorporated in the report and subject to that amendment to approve the report.

3. Feedback from Board on PAB recommendations

There were no comments on the paper.

4. Status report

Before going through the status report paper, Emily Taylor gave the PAB an update on developments with WSIS (the World Summit on the Information Society). She explained that since the last meeting there had been an increasing number of press reports suggesting a split in opinion between the USA and the EU positions, and that the USA had been strongly holding their position that they would not countenance a change to the status quo. It had also proved quite a challenge to achieve consensus of opinion within the EU, as opinions between Member State countries were strongly divided.

Emily reported that she had attended a useful meeting on internet governance at the CBI and that Lesley Cowley had attended a meeting at Chatham House. In addition, both had been giving several press interviews relating to the UK opinion, and that, together with BT, they would be meeting with Rt Hon Alun Michael MP later that week to discuss matters further ahead of the Tunis summit. Emily explained that we were keen to put across the view that the current situation works well.

Lesley Cowley reported that the Board is making excellent progress with the governance review. The issue had been on the agenda at every board meeting since Bob Gilbert was appointed Chairman. The plan is for Lesley and Bob to make a presentation to the January PAB meeting, covering the issues considered during the governance review, as well as the Board's views and recommendations. The PAB will then be able to discuss the review either at the January meeting or at the March meeting, and an Extraordinary General Meeting could be scheduled in the Spring.

Emily summarised the updates in the status report paper and advised that Professor Jonathan Zittrain from the Oxford Internet Institute had agreed to join the PAB as an appointed representative.

5. Working Groups Update

Internationalised Domain Names Working Group

Clive Feather reported that he had received a full pack of summary material and analysis of the Internationalised Domain Names (IDN) consultation and will soon be arranging a meeting of the Working Group.

Lock State Working Group

Hazel Pegg apologised that she had not had time to make any further progress with this group, and did not anticipate being able to in the near future. Hazel reported that there had been no significant interest in the working group from tag holders so far. James Conaghan questioned whether the topic was relevant any longer. Lesley Cowley advised that the issue had come up at a couple of Nominet lunches where some members had expressed a wish to have a way of locking down a domain name to prevent it being hijacked.

Emily Taylor suggested that the Executive could bring a paper to the PAB on the issue rather than trying to progress with the Working Group at this stage. Eric

Ramage offered his help with the paper from an Intellectual Property perspective.

Resolution

The PAB resolved to close the Lock State Working Group and to request the Executive to present a paper to the PAB addressing the remaining issues in the near future.

.net.uk Working Group

Sebastien Lahtinen reported that he had sent a consultation document to the Working Group, which will be published as a PAB consultation later this month.

6. Industry Standards

Sebastien Lahtinen introduced this topic. He explained that, following the presentation on raising industry standards at the September PAB meeting, the Executive had produced a consultation paper for a public consultation that will start in January 2006 and run for three months.

He suggested that Emily Taylor introduced the consultation paper, and that the PAB then gave any comments on the paper itself. He suggested that a subcommittee should be formed to put together the PAB's response to the consultation. He proposed that the PAB should discuss the consultation questions in detail during this meeting to ensure that the subcommittee can represent the views of the whole PAB when putting together their consultation response.

Alex Bligh suggested that the consultation paper would need to include all the details about how to respond and the dates of the consultation period. Emily Taylor confirmed that these would be added before the paper was published.

The PAB agreed to support the consultation paper, and Denesh Bhabuta, Eric Ramage, Hazel Pegg, Gordon Dick, James Conaghan, Sebastien Lahtinen and Alex Kells agreed to form the subcommittee and Eric Ramage volunteered to chair it. Emily Taylor stated that a member of the Executive team would be available to assist the subcommittee to give any assistance if required. Clive Feather agreed to join the subcommittee when asked but explained that he may have to limit his involvement, due to pressure of work.

The PAB then looked at the questions in the consultation paper in detail and discussed several of the issues that would need specific attention during the subcommittee's work on the consultation response. As a result of the discussion, there were also one or two questions that the PAB suggested should be reworded to make them more specific. Sue Daley made the general point that as the paper would be read by people outside of the member and tag holder community, it should be made as clear as possible, and that some terms (such as PGP) should be explained.

Resolution

The PAB supports the paper 'Raising Industry Standards', and the full public consultation and associated outreach, early in 2006 as planned by the Executive team. The PAB agrees to give a written response to the proposals within the consultation paper. The PAB resolved to form a subcommittee to prepare a draft response for the January PAB meeting, and agreed that Eric Ramage should chair the subcommittee.

7. Domain names registered to dissolved registrants

Eleanor Bradley introduced this paper and explained that it had been produced following a request from the May PAB meeting.

Eric Ramage stated that domain names should be realised by the liquidator to minimise the liabilities of a dissolved company. Lesley Cowley explained that a company is 'dissolved' after the liquidation process has been completed, so that issue would not be relevant in the cases this paper is referring to.

Sebastien Lahtinen stated that several PAB members had received an email from a Nominet member who felt that the incentive for third parties, such as his company, to notify Nominet of domain names registered to now dissolved companies, helps Nominet clean its database.

Eric Ramage and Alex Bligh suggested that the proposed policy recommendation should be expanded to include the bullet points in section 4.2 of the paper.

Resolution

The PAB resolves to recommend that the policy for dealing with domain names registered to dissolved registrants be changed as detailed in section 4.2 of the PAB paper 'Domain names registered to dissolved registrants'.

8. Issues with fast cancellations

Clive Feather presented his paper. He explained that Nominet had contacted a customer of Demon because their address details were incorrect and had given the customer 21 days to change the details. The information had not been changed in time, and the domain name was cancelled, which was discovered after the domain name had been registered by a drop catcher. Clive explained that he felt this case had highlighted that there should always be a period of suspension before a domain name is cancelled in these circumstances.

Eleanor Bradley stated that as a result of this case, the Registrant Services department had carried out a review of the operational procedures and from now on will always suspend a domain name before cancellation in these circumstances. Eleanor said that she did not believe this should be a policy matter, as Nominet needs flexibility to be able to respond to customers' needs.

Emily Taylor explained that specifying a suspension period as a policy ties our hands when we need to be flexible and responsive to customers' needs. Bringing issues to the PAB usually adds at least 6 months to the process of making any change.

Alex Bligh suggested that the PAB should focus on wider policy issues than specific matters such as these. In this situation a procedural change had been made to address the issue raised, and it was therefore not a policy matter.

Lesley Cowley suggested that it would be useful for the Executive if the PAB could debate what they believed did constitute policy. Alex Bligh stated that the governance review presentation in January would include what the Board believes constitute policy matters, and suggested that the PAB should have that debate after they have heard the Board's conclusions.

It was agreed that further discussion of this particular paper should be postponed until after the PAB has had its generic policy debate and decided whether or not matters such as these constitute changes of policy, or are merely operational in nature.

9. Feedback from Nominet lunches

Alex Kells gave some feedback from the Nominet lunch which she attended in London in September. About 20 members attended this event and generally people seemed happy with Nominet and the customer support they received. Most of those attending seemed aware of the existence and role of the PAB, although not all of them were clear about who the appointed representatives were.

A number of members who attended the lunch were in favour of longer registration periods, and there were comments and enquiries about the Public Register Subscription Service, Extensible Provisioning Protocol and online management of tag holders' financial information.

There were varied views on some topics. For example, one member commented that they would really appreciate the opportunity for more technical training which was planned, whereas someone else felt that Nominet should not provide any training as it removes the competitive advantage enjoyed by people who have made the effort to teach themselves. Similarly, some members suggested that Nominet should reduce the price of domain names, whereas others felt there was no need to do so, as .uk domain names are already cheaper than .com domain names. Opinion was also divided on whether Nominet should continue to focus solely on domain name registration. Some members were in favour of diversification and expressed disappointment that Nominet had not bid to be the registry for .eu. Others felt strongly that Nominet should not diversify at all.

Lesley Cowley suggested that the key policy issue for the PAB which has arisen from the recent Nominet lunches is the interest in longer registration periods. Lesley suggested that the PAB should perhaps review the issue of introducing longer registration periods in the near future.

10. Matters arising from nom-steer and pab suggest

There were no matters arising.

11. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 11 January 2006.

Sebastien Lahtinen advised that he would be circulating a list of PAB meeting dates for 2006. He also advised that the venue for PAB meetings would change from the January meeting (due to the sale of the building that is currently used) and the details of the new venue would be confirmed in due course.