

POLICY ADVISORY BOARD REPORT
ST JAMES'S SQUARE, LONDON, SW1Y
12 January 2005
MEETING 36

Those present:

Tom Adams	Appointed Member - Cabinet Office (e-Government Unit)
Denesh Bhabuta	Elected Member
Alex Bligh	Appointed Member - Nominet Board
Gordon Dick	Appointed Member - Nominet Board
Michael Duggan	Appointed Member - DTI
Clive Feather	Elected Member
Peter Gradwell	Elected Member
Sebastien Lahtinen	Elected Member (Chair)
Mark Lewis	Appointed Member - Companies House
Alex Kells	Elected Member
Hazel Pegg	Elected Member

From Nominet by invitation of the PAB:

Gareth Cook, Communications Executive
Jay Daley, Director of IT
Emily Taylor, Company Secretary

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from James Conaghan, James Cronin, Sue Daley and Eric Ramage.

2. Approval of December meeting report

The December meeting report was approved unanimously.

3. Feedback from Board on PAB recommendations

Emily Taylor summarised the feedback from the Board on the PAB's recommendations from the December meeting and updated the PAB on the latest version of the Status Report on PAB and CoM issues. Items listed as completed actions would no longer appear on the next version of the report.

4. Working Groups Update

Clive Feather reported that he had completed the consultation paper and sent it to the working group for approval and comments. He will amend the paper in line with the comments he has received and then send it out for public consultation.

Peter Gradwell reported that there had been no progress from either of the other two working groups (variable registration periods and domain lock state). Concern was expressed that the working groups are not getting enough input from members and that maybe the lack of discussion was due to lack of publicity. It was suggested that Nominet should contact online news media about publicising the Internationalised Domain Names consultation to generate additional interest. Jay Daley mentioned that he had so far received a limited response from the data restructuring operational working group list, despite the fact they he had been posting questions for feedback on a daily basis. This suggested that perhaps the lack of feedback was not just as a result of lack of publicity.

5. Proposal to restructure .uk

Sebastien Lahtinen introduced the paper that had been submitted by Steve Dyer. The discussion centred around two questions: 'should .uk be opened up?' and 'if so, how should we do it?'. There was a clear consensus against the proposal. Tom Adams mentioned that when he speaks to colleagues in Brussels they admire the way that this has been managed in the UK.

It was also noted that there was no significant support for this proposal from the members who had discussed it on nom-steer in the days leading up to the meeting.

Resolution

In the light of strong consensus among stakeholders, the PAB unanimously resolved to recommend that no changes are made with respect to opening up registrations at the second level within '.uk'.

6. .net.uk review

Emily introduced the paper and explained that this issue was being brought back to the PAB due to feedback from members at Nominet lunches. The paper recommended the PAB review its previous decision, and if it arrives at the same outcome, it produces a position paper outlining the reasoning for its decision.

Alex Kells suggested that if the criteria for being eligible for a .net.uk registration were widened, the people clamouring for a .net.uk would get it and then this would no longer be an issue. However, this would not please the current holders of .net.uk registrations.

There was a discussion about what the actual rules for .net.uk are and whether these rules are strictly enforced. There was no support in the meeting for opening up the SLD, but some reasonable support for widening it to cover 'internet providers' in the loosest sense.

It was agreed to set up a working group on .net.uk and Sebastien Lahtinen agreed to chair it. Michael Duggan suggested we could invite a representative of Ofcom to join the group. Alex Bligh asked for the executive to provide a paper to answer the question of whether a significant rechartering of an SLD would require the new SLD process to be applied.

Resolution

The PAB resolved to recommend that a working group chaired by Sebastien Lahtinen be created to examine the rules for '.net.uk' and to request the chair to draft a charter to be presented to the Working Group Subcommittee (WGSC) for approval.

The PAB resolved to request the board to produce a paper detailing to what extent changing the rules for an SLD requires additional procedural hurdles including but not limited to reapplication under the new SLD procedure.

7. Projects Programme 2004/5 Update

Jay Daley presented the paper and apologised that it had been so long since the last time an update was published. Sebastien Lahtinen commented that tag holders would appreciate the fact that the paper included information about the timescales for completion of the projects.

8. Automaton Nameserver Check

Jay Daley introduced his paper and outlined the proposal to move this specific check from the zone file build process to the point of registration.

Resolution

The PAB resolved to recommend that the check on the TLD of nameserver records held in the register move from the zone file build process to the Automaton at the point of registration or modification and that any operation that fails this check at this point is prevented from completing and returns an appropriate error message.

9. Amendment to WHOIS output

Jay Daley presented his paper and explained that the present practice of looking up the nameserver information adds a significant time to the WHOIS response. Peter Gradwell suggested that where an IP address is not held that it is stated that this is 'not held on the register'. Clive Feather suggested that we should also state when there is a glue record. Alex Bligh suggested a link in the WHOIS to a plain English page that explains the output of the WHOIS and this was strongly backed by Michael Duggan.

Resolution

The PAB resolved to recommend that the WHOIS output be changed to no longer display the IP addresses of nameservers where that information is not held on the register, providing that the absence of IP addresses is satisfactorily explained either in the WHOIS response or at a link therein.

10. Amendment to PAB rules

Emily Taylor explained that the executive had made the changes to the PAB rules that the PAB had requested, but noted as Clive Feather had suggested that the rules needed an 'MOT'.

Alex Bligh suggested that there were three different categories of changes:-

- * Some minor word/syntax/reference changes
- * Some minor policy changes
- * Some wholesale policy changes

and he commented that none of the changes being suggested fell into the third category. Sebastien Lahtinen suggested that the executive look at Clive's suggestions and use them as a basis for a new draft rules paper.

Resolution

The PAB resolved to request the board that the executive redraft the PAB rules to clarify them and resolve such ambiguities and logical defects as have been identified, in each case with minimal policy changes, and to present the draft changes as a paper to the next PAB meeting.

11. Publication of statistics on tag holders

Jay Daley explained that the type of information it was proposing to be published was not available widely in the industry and we felt that it was right to give people access to it. Alex Bligh commented that there was a trade off between transparency and commercial confidentiality, and that this information can only be obtained from Nominet. Not publishing this information can mean that debates about voting rights and governance issues are not informed as they could be. Alex Bligh stated under the current system it is possible for information to seep out, but not in a predictable or fair manner.

As board members have access to it, there could be situations where they could be seen to have a competitive advantage. Tom Adams mentioned that in government where sensitive information is due to be published they specify in advance the date on which it will be published, which neutralises any competitive advantage.

Sebastien Lahtinen was concerned that in the case of smaller tag holders it may be easier to work out what domains they were gaining or losing. Michael Duggan suggested that to get around this perhaps the results of just the 250 biggest tag holders be published. Alex Bligh suggested that one option was to anonymise the figures outside the top 500, as the tag holders in that top bracket manage 94% of the total number of domain names. However, it was felt overall that there was not so much of a problem for the smaller ISPs to necessitate making any of the figures anonymous.

Resolution

The PAB resolved to recommend the policy change of publishing monthly statistics about tags, including the number of domains per tag, the number of new registrations per month, the number of renewals per month, and the number transferred in and out per month. The PAB further resolved to recommend that publication should take place on a fixed day each month, and that reasonable warning of the policy change should be given to tag holders.

12. PAB elections update

Sebastien Lahtinen reported that he, Peter Gradwell, Hazel Pegg and Clive Feather were coming to the end of their current two year term and will be eligible to stand for re-election in the coming PAB elections. He also stated that a letter calling for nominations would soon be issued to members.

It was suggested that a PAB induction should be organised for April to cater for any newly elected members or replacements for appointed representatives. Michael Duggan asked if there was a procedure for an appointed organisation changing their representative. Sebastien Lahtinen replied that the PAB would usually ask the outgoing representative to arrange a successor from within their organisation.

13. Matters arising from nom-steer and pab-suggest

Sebastien Lahtinen questioned whether or not any paper should be accepted from non-PAB members or whether such papers should be 'sponsored' by a PAB member. Alex Bligh replied that such matters have been at the discretion of the PAB chair.

There was a brief discussion about the issue of the cancelled domain names that had been debated on nom-steer. Alex Bligh advised that the PAB had resolved some years ago that every change to a domain not made by the tag holder should result in an automatic notification.

14. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 9 March 2005. It was agreed that St James's Square was a generally more suitable venue and it would be good to make a block booking for all PAB meetings this year.