

Two letter domains under .co.uk and .org.uk

1. Background

Nominet's rules for registration of domain names in .co.uk and .org.uk currently prevent the registration of two letter domains, whereas in .ltd.uk they are permitted. [NB there are some 26 two letter domains in circulation, registered pre-Nominet.]

The PAB previously discussed the introduction and possible mechanisms for the release of two-letter combinations under .co.uk and .org.uk in June and August 2001, (<http://www.nominet.org.uk/policy/pab/previousmeetings/2001/>).

In summary, the PAB's position has been that whilst in principle it is desirable for the remaining two letter domains to be released, the practical difficulties in doing so were such that it has recommended they stay reserved and unavailable.

2. Further information

We have received a recent complaint from a prospective registrant that there is no good reason for two letter domains not to be available for registration, given that there are no longer any technical reasons for not using them and indeed we have allowed registration in the .ltd.uk SLD. This position is perverse and unreasonable, according to the complainant.

We also note that new TLDs (e.g. .eu) have managed to negotiate their sunrises for an entire new registry, including two letter domains. Whilst there would be costs incurred in running any sunrise for the newly available two letter domains, Nominet would appear to have the option to fund such an event from existing resources, or indeed to auction/ charge a premium to successful registrants in order to recoup these costs.

Finally, in the event of profiting from an auction/ premium pricing of new two letter domains, Nominet now has the option of donating any profit from this exercise to a charitable purpose for the benefit of the Internet community generally through the Nominet Foundation.

3. Discussion

The PAB has agreed to review the policy for two letter domains as part of the 2008 work programme. The PAB is invited to consider:

1. Should two-letter domains at the third level be made available under .co.uk and .org.uk?
2. If they should:
 - a. Do safeguards need to be put in place, and if so what?
 - b. Should there be a special approach to releasing domains?
3. Of the various approaches to issuing names (auction, lottery, independent panel arbitration against defined guidelines, sunrise for rights-holders, pre-qualification, free for all using DRS to sort out the problems):
 - a. Should any be avoided for policy reasons?
 - b. Are any seen as unfair to particular stakeholder groups?
 - c. In which case, can the problem be fixed?
 - d. Some of the approaches will lead to a windfall: what do we do with it?