

POLICY ADVISORY BOARD REPORT
PORTMAN SQUARE, LONDON, W1
7 April 2004
MEETING 31

Those present:

Denesh Bhabuta	Elected Member
Alex Bligh	Appointed Member - Council of Management
Iain Bourne	Appointed Member - Office of Information Commissioner
James Cronin	Elected Member
Sue Daley	Appointed Member - CBI
Steve Dyer	Appointed Member - Council of Management
Clive Feather	Elected Member
Peter Gradwell	Elected Member
Sebastien Lahtinen	Elected Member
Mark Lewis	Appointed Member - Companies House
Alex Kells	Elected Member
[Hazel Pegg	Elected Member - by teleconference, items 3,9,10,11]
Eric Ramage	Appointed Member - ITMA

From Nominet by invitation of the PAB:

Jay Daley, Director of IT
Nick Soulsby, Communications Manager
Gareth Cook, Communications Executive

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from John Borrás, James Conaghan and Kathy Riley.

2. Welcome to new members

Peter Gradwell welcomed Alex Kells and James Conaghan (in his absence) to the PAB.

3. Election of PAB Chair

Sebastien Lahtinen and Eric Ramage volunteered to take over from Peter Gradwell as PAB Chair.

Resolution

The PAB resolved to elect Sebastien Lahtinen as PAB Chair. The PAB resolved to express its thanks to Richard Almeida and Ben Laurie for their service on the PAB, and to Peter Gradwell for his time chairing the PAB.

4. Approval of February meeting report

The February meeting report was approved unanimously.

Alex Bligh pointed out that the PAB agenda and papers had been published late on this occasion. Gareth Cook explained that the reason for the delay was that Peter Gradwell had met Lesley Cowley to plan the agenda a week later than usual, which put the process back by a week. Iain Bourne suggested that PAB papers should be written in a way that make them clearer for the general reader, without using acronyms. He also suggested a glossary of acronyms could be used.

5. Feedback from CoM on PAB recommendations

Sebastien went through the paper provided by the CoM. Clive Feather requested that the PAB be updated when items from previous papers have been completed.

Resolution

The PAB resolved to request the Council of Management to provide an "issue register" tracking the state of previous recommendations to supplement the Council of Management's feedback paper.

6. Working Groups

The proposed charters for the first two working groups (on Lock State and Internationalised Domain Names) had been vetoed by the Working Group Subcommittee as all parties concerned realised that they needed more work. The charters will be redrafted and submitted for consideration at the next PAB meeting.

Resolution

The PAB resolved to accept the advice of the WGSC to reject the two applications to create working groups (for Lock State, and Internationalised Domain Names) as the charters were not yet in a suitable final form, noting that the prospective chairs were still working with the WGSC towards interim approval.

The PAB resolved to clarify the rules for working groups, defining "the next PAB meeting" as "the next PAB meeting discounting any meeting within 3 weeks", to allow sufficient notice for the papers to be submitted.

7. Variable registration periods

Peter Gradwell introduced a paper on the topic of variable registration periods, which is a topic that was initially discussed at Nominet's 2003 member lunches programme. 19 out of a total of 82 members who had attended events had stated that they wanted Nominet to offer variable domain name registration periods.

A discussion took place that centred on the issues of whether Nominet should support partial year registrations (to allow registrations to come in line with renewal dates) and whether Nominet should support multiple year registrations of more than two years.

Alex Bligh suggested that the discussion should be a part of the review of the positive renewals process, as variable registration periods had been suggested in the initial stages of planning the proposals for the positive renewals system. Clive Feather argued that the issue of variable registration periods was more relevant to registering domain names than renewals, and that as such it was necessary to wait until renewals were reviewed before discussing this topic.

Peter Gradwell pointed out that the PAB is due to discuss the positive renewals system at its next meeting in June, so it would not mean deferring the issue for long.

Alex Bligh suggested that a working group should be created to review positive renewals AND registration periods and Peter Gradwell agreed to bring a charter for the working group to the next PAB meeting.

Steve Dyer suggested that the new working group should make it clear whether or not they will be considering the impact that offering longer registration periods would have on Nominet's finances. Further discussion suggested that the financial impact and details of implementation were operational problems for Nominet to resolve rather than a policy issue.

8. DNSSEC and WHOIS abuse

Jay Daley introduced his paper on DNNSEC. He explained that unlike current WHOIS lookups that only let people see part of the registration data, DNSSEC would allow people to derive the whole zonefile. If Nominet were to adopt DNSSEC we would have to change our policy and protect the zonefiles in a different way from the way we do now. The paper outlined several potential ways around the problem, and the PAB were asked for their feedback on the options.

There was a general discussion about the various options. James Cronin suggested that Nominet should go back to the IETF and suggest that they change DNSSEC. Peter Gradwell suggested that Nominet should lobby the IETF to change DNSSEC with the help of CENTR/RIPE. Clive Feather suggested that we should consider implement DNSSEC in a non-standard way, without the NXT records, in order to avoid the potential problems. Alex Bligh emphasised the need to protect Nominet's copyright and intellectual property rights in the database.

Eric Ramage asked what the implications for Nominet were if they did not adopt DNSSEC. Clive Feather suggested that in five or six years' time it will become best practice for security on the internet, and Nominet would therefore be seriously out of step with the rest of the industry.

Jay Daley then presented another paper outlining amendments to Nominet's abuse policies.

Resolution:

The PAB resolved to confirm its policy that Nominet should continue to protect its zonefiles, and allow access to its database only under controlled circumstances.

The PAB resolved to confirm its policy that Nominet should support secure DNS protocols subject to the above constraint.

The PAB resolved to recommend to the Council of Management that it should urgently enter a dialogue with the IETF and DNSSEC working groups highlighting the problems of the enumeration of zonefiles using DNSSEC, and work with other bodies such as RIPE and CENTR to do the same.

The PAB resolved to recommend to the Council of Management that it investigate anti-abuse mechanisms (including but not limited to implementation of only a subset of DNSSEC) to minimise the impact of enumeration of zonefiles using DNSSEC should the current proposals for the DNSSEC protocol remain unchanged.

The PAB resolved to endorse the recommendations of the Executive on Amendments to Abuse Policies in respect of the PRSS, WHOIS and WHOIS2 services, but requested that it be notified if and when the anti-abuse mechanisms change.

9. Voting Structure Review

The PAB considered the paper submitted by James Conaghan which called for a review of the voting structure for Nominet's Council of Management elections.

The PAB concluded that it would be better to wait and discuss this topic after the result of Willie Black's corporate governance review, especially as any discussion on this topic is highly unlikely to affect the election this year, as the voting rights have already been calculated.

It was anticipated that the results of the corporate governance review would be available for either the June or August PAB meeting, and it was suggested that any further discussion of the topic should be postponed until then.

Resolution:

The PAB resolved to ask the Council of Management to provide a status report on its Governance Review.

10. Tag Holder Agreement

The PAB discussed the paper submitted by James Conaghan which suggested that as some tag holders are still delaying tag changes, Nominet should review the Tag Holder Agreement to give them greater power to insist that tag holders comply.

Alex Bligh commented that he had specifically asked at a board meeting whether allegations of a breach of the THA by a tag holder that were formally reported were investigated, and if there was a breach whether action was taken to ensure the tag holder was made to comply. He had been given assurances that this was the case.

Steve Dyer pointed out that the paper seemed to be calling for Nominet to enforce the 'spirit' of the agreement, but Nominet only has the power to enforce the 'letter of the law'.

Eric Ramage stated that the PAB had been reviewing the THA regularly since 1999, but that this is very different from actually enforcing it.

Alex Kells commented that people often complain on non-steer about tag changes rather than making complaints to Nominet, as in many cases it is the registrant's fault because the tag holder does not have their correct contact information and they would need to correct this information before informing Nominet of the problem.

James Cronin and Clive Feather expressed the view that Nominet should publicise the fact that the THA is being enforced and that some tag holders have had their tags removed as a result of non-compliance. They suggested that perhaps this should be covered in a future issue of Nominet News.

Resolution:

The PAB resolved to reiterate its policy that the Tag Holder Agreement should continue to be enforced.

The PAB, noting that it did not believe there are currently general problems in the enforcement of the Tag Holder Agreement, resolved to ask the Council of Management whether or not making the agreement more specific would aid its enforcement.

The PAB resolved to recommend that the Council of Management clarify the procedure for making complaints about a tag holder's alleged non-compliance with the tag holder agreement, and also to ensure that tag holders' obligations under the agreement are successfully communicated to tag holders.

11. 'Offensive' registrations and me.uk

The PAB considered the paper submitted by James Conaghan, which pointed out that there were several registrations within the .me.uk SLD which could be considered 'offensive' and asked whether Nominet should be doing anything about this.

The discussion that followed concluded that Nominet has no such duty of care, although it is desirable that offensive domain names and websites should be dealt with by other bodies than Nominet. It was felt that for Nominet to intervene in such matters would run counter to all its previous policies and its neutral position. It was emphasised that the IWF (Internet Watch Foundation), OFCOM and other organisations exist for the purpose of dealing with concerns about website content and similar issues.

Resolution:

The PAB resolved to reiterate its policy that Nominet should not attempt to prevent lawful registration of domain names that some might consider offensive.

The PAB resolved to confirm its prior recommendations on rule changes to .me.uk, and resolved to request that the Council of Management expedite the redrafting of the .me.uk rules and the associated consultation process.

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

There were no matters arising from nom-steer and pab-suggest.

13. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 2 June 2004.