

Methods of work – PAB discussion paper.

1. Input from Nominet members and the wider community.

It is clear from the previous discussion that we must address how best to engage Nominet members and other stakeholders; firstly to enable them to raise policy issues that might usefully be addressed by the PAB, and secondly to enable us quickly and efficiently to obtain sufficient facts and information to reach informed conclusions on the policy advice that we should give the Board.

In our previous discussions, one member expressed concern about the level of awareness among stakeholders of the existence of the pab-suggest email address for raising issues with the PAB, while another felt it was up to individual PAB members to promote and make themselves visible at events. I think it was generally thought that the channels of communication available might be too narrow and not visible to all stakeholders.

There was a suggestion that

- (i) The PAB should consult with the public before making recommendations,
- (ii) The PAB should work more closely with other agencies and that
- (iii) The pool of appointed members should be increased.

I think the general feeling of the meeting was that suggestion (i) is not appropriate (and I think it is not practical). There is not sufficient time to consult publicly before making recommendations on every issue, and when it is appropriate to do so, Nominet puts policy issues out to public consultation.

As to suggestion (ii), the PAB can certainly work more closely with other agencies, and is already demonstrating an ability to do so, in the ongoing debate on Phishing.

As to suggestion (iii), I personally agree with the other appointed members who said that simply increasing the pool of appointed members is unlikely to be productive. One appointed member commented that if the appointed members did not feel that the meetings were useful then they would not attend. The PAB needs to make it clear what Nominet is and what it wants in order to get specific useful input on relevant issues.

Another felt that if the pool was larger, there would be less pressure on the appointed members to attend meetings which could result in appointed members being less likely to attend meetings that are not of specific interest to them. This in turn, could mean that increasing the pool of appointed members would actually result in fewer appointed members attending. The PAB would therefore lose some of the representation of the wider community that comes from the appointed members.

Clearly appointed members should be from relevant and wide ranging organisations. In this regard one member noted that the only representation of commercial organisations

(companies) is from the registrar sector that are represented by elected members, and wondered if this could or should be balanced in some way? My own view is that it does not seem appropriate to invite specific commercial organisations to send appointed members. Elected members are elected as individuals, not as representatives of their companies. To take a hypothetical example, if a large manufacturer of proprietary software was invited to send an appointed member, firstly that member would be representing his employer, not the wider community, secondly would that member attend meetings to discuss any issue other than those of specific concern to his employer's particular commercial interests, and thirdly should a distributor of generic Linux software be invited to send a member to redress the balance?

Consequently I think it would be more productive to address how best to engage Nominet members and other stakeholders to enable the PAB quickly and efficiently to obtain sufficient facts and information to reach informed conclusions on the policy advice that we should give the Board. We already have a well established policy of inviting people to address the PAB on specific issues, and we have the recent precedent of co-operating with APACS on the specific issue of Phishing. I propose whenever possible to make more use of these established precedents.

I shall welcome further debate and suggestions on how else to engage stakeholders to obtain sufficient facts and information quickly and efficiently to reach informed conclusions on our debates.

Questions:

(i) What action might we reasonably ask Nominet to take to publicise the existence, and the work, of the PAB?

(ii) In particular should there be a marketing campaign to promote the pab-suggest email address?

2. Standing agenda item

PAB members must take increased responsibility for the work programme and for developing the discussion on specific issues. The role of the Executive is to support members in their work. Leadership needs to come from members.

I propose to include **“New Items for the Work Programme”** as a standing item in the agenda. This will ensure that members are given every opportunity to raise issues that they feel to be important. I agree with the excellent suggestion that individual PAB members should be able to add an item to the work programme by writing a paper, and that these papers can be introduced by individual members without seeking the prior approval of the rest of the PAB. Obviously to introduce a topic the member must actually produce a paper to enable the PAB to consider the issues as outlined in **Point 3 (b)** below.

3. Development of the Discussion

The next issue to address is how to drive the debate forward once we have our policy issue to discuss. This can be broken down into a combination of two or three of six possible stages, as discussed in my last paper and which I now put forward for due discussion and adoption.

a. Identify the issue: what are the policy implications?

These may be raised either by a paper submitted by the Executive (which may itself have been developed from an issue raised or identified by a Nominet member or other stakeholder) or by a individual PAB member (which may have been written by that member at the request of the PAB as part of the scheduled work programme or may have been written and submitted by an individual PAB member personally as discussed in **Item 2** above).

b. Initial discussion to identify key issues and points of view:

In some cases, this will be done in the initial discussion of any paper submitted as discussed in **Point (a)** above. For complex issues, breaking into teams to develop and brainstorm the issues has been shown to be particularly useful, and I will use this technique wherever this is appropriate.

c. Agreement on handling:

This could be either to agree an individual PAB member to lead the work or to set up a sub-committee. It would then be that person's responsibility to prepare proposals and make recommendations for the subsequent discussion. Some inter-sessional work might be done on line, without the need for face-to-face meetings.

d. Encourage input from Nominet members and the wider community.

I propose to continue the practice of inviting external experts to attend meetings to improve understanding – as we did with the discussion on phishing – in addition to any other proposals emerging from our discussion of **Item 1** above.

e. The final discussion should be based on proposals from PAB members.

While we should aim for consensus, we need to recognise divergent views: any advice should clearly identify who opposes and on what grounds: this will help the Board to understand the context of the PAB's advice.

f. We should schedule our discussion over at least two meetings.

The first meeting will cover Points a and b and the second will cover Point e. These meetings can be supplemented by work done on line or in sub-committees as outlined in Point c. On exceptional occasions we might need a meeting to cover the issues mentioned in Point d, in which case the Final Discussion (Point e) would become the third meeting. Clearly the work programme needs to recognise that few discussions will lead to advice at a single discussion.