

Nominet Wait List Service Recommendation to the PAB

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A. Introduction

This document details the PAB subcommittee's recommendation on Wait Listing Services, and forms a recommendation to the PAB. Unless and until endorsed by the PAB, it is not an official PAB position.

It takes into account feedback on version 1.00 of the PAB paper "Nominet Wait Listing Services – A PAB Consultation" produced in response to the Subcommittee of the PAB dealing with Wait Listing Services.

The PAB subcommittee consisted of Alex Bligh, Steve Dyer, Ben Laurie, and Peter Gradwell.

B. Summary of Feedback

The executive summary of the feedback from the consultation response, as detailed elsewhere, was considered, and was agreed. For reference it is reproduced below.

The submissions provide no conclusive view for or against a WLS.

Many of those who argue against it now do so on the basis that the consultation exercise is premature, and other possibilities have not been explored, believing that the new renewals system's implementation, the PRSS review, the clearing of the detagged domain backlog, and the automaton anti-abuse provisions may all have significant impact.

Of those who did support a WLS, the characteristics receiving most support were:

- Multiple subscriptions per domain name on a first come first served basis
- Subscription period tied to the underlying domain name
- Subscription in the name of the end registrant
- Nominet's current business model (tag-changes, transfers, direct & indirect) duplicated as far as possible
- No change to grace period from that in the new renewals system
- No DRS for WLS subscriptions

C. Recommendation

Firstly, many respondents were under the misapprehension that a decision had already been taken to proceed with a WLS in some form. This is not the case – indeed as the original consultation document stated "The executive requested that the PAB should consider whether a 'Wait List Service' should be implemented. The PAB subsequently set up a subcommittee to investigate this, with specific reference to whether Nominet should operate a Wait Listing Service ... The issues to be examined by the subcommittee are the desirability of, and processes and procedures for a wait-listing service, at a policy level." The subcommittee confirmed this in its meeting to consider the feedback, noting that there are three possible categories into which any outcome may fall – for a WLS, against a WLS, and "wait a while". An outcome in the latter category might be due to the consultation process having shown itself to be inadequate, or the data available being insufficient.

The subcommittee noted that the original impulse for the WLS consultation was in fact two-fold. Firstly, that of operational load on Nominet due to what is described as abuse of the automaton. Secondly, the putative change in functionality of the PRSS, due the PRSS review currently underway.

The subcommittee further noted that, aside from this, many respondents viewed a WLS as a useful service in any case, and the presence of improvised WLS services provided by some third parties indicates that there is a consumer demand for such services.

The subcommittee noted that even if one assumed a WLS was per-se desirable, it would not and could not be implemented sufficiently quickly to solve operational problems (such as perceived automaton abuse), and further that many initiatives are already underway to provide their own solutions (or partial solutions) to this problem. This includes anti-abuse policies and procedures, the reduction of the detagged and expired domain back-log, and the change to a new (positive) renewals system. Whilst the effect of these measures cannot be quantified with certainty, it appears to be executive's opinion that continued stable operation of Nominet's registration systems is not dependent on introduction of a WLS. We received no submissions suggesting this was not the case, and received several submissions suggesting other mechanisms should be used (or at least tried) to solve the operational issues.

The subcommittee further noted that many proposed changes were in process of implementation at the present time. Introduction of a WLS would consume a large amount of development resource, that would either be additional to the resource currently deployed on these projects, or detract from that resource. Further, the fact that many of these projects (particularly the renewals process changes, and the return of expired domain names to the pool) are at an early stage makes it more difficult to assess the impact of a WLS system. Many respondents supported this view.

The subcommittee noted that many of those arguing against a WLS service argued in terms of "not at this time", as opposed to "not at all". Even of those supporting a WLS concept, some mentioned that there were as yet many unknowns.

The subcommittee noted that those in favour of a WLS had relatively homogeneous views on what form such a WLS should take.

The subcommittee further noted the views on adequacy of consultation. The subcommittee did not consider those providing an existing improvised WLS service were a separate group to be consulted. This option was, and continues to be, open to any tag-holder, and as such it is unclear why their views should be analysed separately from the remainder of tag-holders, or the membership. Therefore, they do not, in the opinion of the subcommittee, form a separate constituency. The subcommittee did, however, recognize that existing PRSS subscribers were a possible separate group to be consulted, as many were not members or tag-holders.

The subcommittee noted that whilst the response rate (22 responses) was encouraging in respect of prior Nominet PAB consultations, and contained some responses from non-members, it still represented only a small proportion of members, and a miniscule proportion of registrants.

Therefore the subcommittee recommended that:

1. No recommendation be made to the CoM to proceed with a WLS service at this stage.
2. That the matter be reviewed by the PAB in 6 months time, taking into account results of the various Nominet projects, including the automaton anti-abuse provisions, the clearing of the backlog of detagged & expired domain names, the new renewals system, and the PRSS review.
3. That such a review should be done with regard to the points raised in submissions to this consultation
4. That Nominet's executive should alert the PAB should a WLS be required for operational rather than policy reasons
5. That Nominet's executive should bear in mind the likely design parameters of a WLS (should one eventually be determined desirable) when designing new systems.