



.gov.uk Naming and Approvals Committee Minutes

26/09/2007, Hercules House, London

Attendees

Adam Bailin, COI
Sarajane Brock, UKERNA
Linda Godden, UKERNA
Peter Atkins, UKERNA
Steve Clark, CPNI
Lucky Afzal, CSIA
David Hall, Scottish Executive

Apologies

Bill Parslow, Brighton & Hove City Council
Damien Shaw, UKERNA
Sebastian Crump, COI

Transformational Government

1. Registration of domain names from central government departments has declined steadily over the last two years since the Transformational Government Strategy came into force. Convergence of websites around agreed audience channels, including Directgov and Businesslink, has seen departments set out plans for rationalisation of their web presence. The second phase of this work has included plans for the convergence of executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), where the generally agreed practice is to migrate corporate content to the parent department's website and other content to the agreed audience channels.
2. Domain naming policy has attempted to support the wider policy objectives where possible. However, the situation with respect to local government bodies has been less clear. While it has been possible to raise objections to domain name applications for being *against the spirit of* Transformational Government, it has not been possible to say that they are *against the letter of*. As a result, the pattern of domain name registrations in the local government space has remained erratic over the last two years and rarely drops below ten per month.
3. After reviewing the statistics and considering two illustrative case studies (hampshirejobs.gov.uk and kentconnects.gov.uk), the committee decided to adopt a 'presumption of rejection' approach to applications from local government bodies. The following types of consideration would determine whether an application was exceptional:

- Provision of new information
- Helping the end user – improving the user experience
- From a novel entity (that doesn't already have a web presence)
- Promotes transformational activities e.g. shared services

Gov Connect and Scots Connect were both cited as examples of transformational activity.

4. For those applications from government bodies failing to provide adequate evidence of the above, the Committee would recommend, where appropriate, the use of a sub-domain or sub-folder of the existing local government website.
5. The Committee also agreed to investigate the possibility of using a list of authorised personnel, maintained by the Gov Connects Security Team, to check registrations from local government bodies.

Security Issues

6. Two recent security audits of government websites (coi.gov.uk and midlothian.gov.uk) have brought to attention the risk of *social engineering* attacks. This is where the IT estate of an organisation is compromised through human-to-human interaction, for example an individual posing as a website owner asking an ISP to update server settings. While the risk is low, and should be prevented by standard security procedures, it has highlighted the ease of availability of personal details via the standard WHOIS lookup. Government websites are particularly at risk as it would appear that commercial organisations do not make public the details of individuals responsible for their domain names. This also has the added advantage of surviving changes in personnel.
7. Nominet have confirmed by telephone that it is not a requirement in the UK to publish registrant contacts via the WHOIS lookup service. The Government has been exceptional in choosing to insist on this practice.
8. After some consideration of the available options, the Committee decided to adopt the following approach:
 - Reduce the contact details collected from three (admin-c, tech-c, reg-c) to two (organisational and ISP)
 - Insist on a generic position or role as part of the organisational contact (to appear in the WHOIS lookup)
 - Continue to collect the name of the individual responsible for the domain name (to be used for non-ISP administrative issues)

This approach is to be supported by the newly designed online form for new domain name requests (see next).

Online Form

9. A new project was initiated in Spring 2007 to design an online form for registering new domain names. Prompted by the large percentage of applications received with missing information and/or avoidable errors (e.g. missing '-pc' from parish councils), the idea was to create an accessible, easy to use web form to reduce the administrative burden of processing applications.
10. The committee carried out a walkthrough exercise on the latest draft of the form, suggesting language, design and functionality refinements – including those necessary to reflect the changes to contact information outlined above.

Actions

1. **Lucky Afzal** to speak to Gov Connect regarding list of authorised personnel
2. **Lucky Afzal** to speak to Gov Connect regarding representation on committee
3. **Adam Bailin** to draft policy guidance on local government applications
4. **Adam Bailin** to find documentary evidence of legal position relating to UK position on the publication of individual names in the WHOIS directory
5. **Lind Godden** to make the agreed changes to the online form
6. **ALL** to read the draft guidance on the use of www, sub-domains and sub-folders and provide comments by October 12, 2007