

Feedback on Nominet .uk proposal (1st July 2013)

By Sandra Wilde on 22nd September 2013.

One cannot develop a fully rounded view regarding the current proposal to introduce .uk without first looking at the previous proposal in addition to both summaries of the feedback received during that consultation.

The previous proposal by Nominet to introduce .uk was so wrong that nothing from the first proposal was reflected in the current proposal.

Perhaps Nominet got it so wrong in their first proposal because they over-looked or merely discounted the importance of the already existing 10,000,000 UK namespace domains.

Of the feedback received during the consultation, one overriding significant message emerged,

No existing UK domain registrants should not be damaged by the introduction of UK

It is alarming to have to send such a message to Nominet, guardians of the UK namespace.

Nominet claim to have understood the feedback and agreed security and trust should be kept separate from any one UK domain extension, due to the difficulties it would create for the other UK extensions. Yet, in the current proposal, the first features for .uk are 'address verification and address for service', which would be used to show .uk is more trustworthy and secure and hence as explained clearly in the previous .uk feedback the 10,000,000 existing domains would be seen as less trustworthy and secure, even if the other extensions could still have the features on an optional basis as people will not go to effort of looking at Whois.

The current .uk proposal has fundamental flaws:

1. It only protects domain holders who find out about .uk with an opt-in system rather than acting for all domain UK owners by making it an automatic entitlement, thus preventing cybersquatting and consequently damage to potentially millions of businesses.
2. Enhancing features to .uk that make .uk more trustworthy and secure, would therefore imply the .co.uk and .org.uk's are less trustworthy and less secure
3. Nominet have taken no account of the extra burden to businesses by creating an extra £500,000,000 in domain costs over the next 20 years, contrasting this with an estimated £1 million of costs to Nominet over the same period.
4. It does not address the issue of the real security problems caused by confusion between .co.uk and .uk.
5. There is no vision of what the UK namespace will look like, it is not adequate to state existing UK extensions will carry on as they do now and will be supported.
6. They have not provided independent evidence of the benefit of .uk and the effects on the existing UK domain holders and consumers.

I would suggest the alternative proposal of introducing .uk domains via .uk and .co.uk pairing would solve the problems raised.

.uk is for business: as the new prime UK extension. The other UK tld's such as .org.uk .ac.uk work as they do now. This case was strongly put forward in the previous .uk proposal.

.co.uk owners automatically get .uk: about .uk. As well as being fair, this is cheap and quick to introduce and prevents the cybersquatting that could occur on any opt-in distribution.

.uk is free. The minimal costs incurred would easily be covered by Nominet's existing surplus. This initiative would increase renewal rates and create interest for new domain registrations for the combined .co.uk and .uk domain.

.co.uk and .uk redirect at registry level. This way the website and email would work as one, with only one being prime so only one principal domain rather than two separate websites.

A .co.uk and .uk linked ownership that cannot be split would eliminate security concerns of confusion between the current prime UK extension (.co.uk) and the new prime UK extension (.uk).

Even though this is my preferred option, I recognise that an independent study should be undertaken to investigate the consequences if this option were to be adopted, due to the significant impact on the whole UK economy.

Extensive consultation coupled with detailed explanation should be undertaken to reach the widest possible range of stakeholders and appraise them of the options available. Something not yet done in the drive to have .uk introduced.

Simple in concept to explain to consumers, .co.uk and .uk are one and the same. All other UK extensions will be sold as they are now.