

The Nominet .uk proposal

Understanding the consequences of a new .uk TLD

The aim of this paper is to inform UK businesses, not-for-profit organisations and the media about what is happening in the .UK namespace and how it could affect their internet presence. We believe that the .UK proposals as they stand could create significant confusion, unfairness and expensive rebranding costs to businesses.

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Nominet the .uk registry (www.nominet.org.uk) is a not-for-profit public purpose company who have managed a number of second level domains (SLDs) since 1996:

Nominet .uk Registry	
Second level domains managed by Nominet	Second level domains delegated to other organisations
.co.uk (Commercial)	.ac.uk (Universities)
.org.uk (Not-for-profit)	.gov.uk (Government)
.me.uk (Personal)	.mod.uk and .mil.uk (Military)
.ltd.uk (Limited companies)	.nhs.uk (NHS)
.plc.uk (Public limited companies)	.police.uk (Police)
.net.uk (ISPs)	.judiciary.uk (Courts)
.sch.uk (Schools)	.parliament.uk (Parliament)

For the past 17 years the namespace has run perfectly well like this until...

The first Nominet .uk consultation 01/10/12

On 1st October 2012 Nominet first consulted on a proposal to open up the namespace directly under .uk – the proposal was called “direct.uk” as a new second level extension:

www.yourname.uk

The proposal focused on trademark rights and implementing security measures such as DNSSEC. However the proposal was met with an outcry from stakeholders in particular the registrar community. Read the consultation summary here:

[Direct.uk Consultation Summary of Feedback](#) by Nominet 26/02/13

[Nominet direct.uk Consultation Response Analysis](#) by Nomensa 25/02/13

Therefore on 26th February 2013 the Nominet board decided “There was not a consensus of support for the direct.uk proposals as presented” and that “a revised phased release mechanism based largely on the prior registrations of domains in existing third levels within .uk” would be produced by June 2013 .

See [Nominet February Communique 2013](#)

The second Nominet .uk consultation 01/07/13

On the 1st July 2013 Nominet then released its [second .uk consultation](#).

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The most important aspect of this proposal is “the oldest current continuous registration would be given priority” across .co.uk .org.uk .me.uk .ltd.uk .plc.uk. However Nominet also say there are “around 500,000 domains names, constituting 5% of the .uk registry that have identical third level strings – across more than one second level domain space”. Which means in most cases the registrant will not be identical:

Domain	.co.uk reg date	.org.uk reg date	.me.uk reg date	Winner of .uk
<u>Windows.co.uk</u>	19-May-2005	09-May-2004	14-Jan-2002	Windows.me.uk

Consequences of the Nominet .uk proposals

We believe if .uk is introduced in the way Nominet propose, there are unforeseen and damaging consequences that are likely to happen:

- 250,000 businesses may find they don't have the right to their equivalent .uk.
- 10,000's of businesses, after .uk is introduced, will forget to renew the .co.uk.
- Organizations that move over to .uk will incur huge rebranding costs
- Confusion will reign over what the different UK domain extensions mean compared to the order we have at present with .co.uk, .org.uk, .me.uk etc
- Moving from .co.uk to .uk will be very disruptive to search engine optimisation (SEO), which many businesses will not understand and will prove costly.
- Confidence in UK domains may be lost by the consumer in the way Nominet has handled the introduction, which may affect existing registrants/registrar.
- Confidence over time may be lost in businesses that maintain .co.uk and don't move over to .uk and so suffer commercially in the long term if they did not obtain the equivalent .uk.
- It will be harder to find a new domain .uk if everybody wants the .uk, whereas before certain organizations used different extensions such as .org.uk.
- There will also be a wave of cybercrime based on .uk domain names including phishing, typo-squatting and pre-order / registration scams.

Proposed Solution

We believe there are two sensible options available to Nominet:

1. Do not open .uk at the top level and create more second level domains to provide more capacity and choice for registrants e.g. .bank.uk .shop.uk
2. Open .uk however give all .co.uk registrants first priority on .uk (free first refusal for two years). This is because most of .uk registrants are based in .co.uk & the other SLDs are restricted / intended for non-commercial use.