

Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)

Minutes of the Meeting held on February 25th 2016

Meeting Location: Ascot Suite, O'Callaghan Alexander Hotel, Dublin 2

Meeting called to order at approximately 10:40am by meeting Chair.

Members present:

Chair	Alfie Shaw
Department of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources	Rory Conaty
Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation	James Kelly
.ie Accredited Registrar	Conor Moran (Irish Domains)
.ie Accredited Registrar	Jonathan Bate (Hosting Ireland)
.ie Accredited Registrar	Kelly Salter (Register 365)
.ie Accredited Registrar	Michele Neylon (Blacknight Solutions)
ICS	Kevin Thomas
IIA	Joan Mulvihill
ISPAI	Fred Logue
SFA	Linda Barry
IEDR	Jimmy Joyce

IEDR Representatives:

David Curtin
Oonagh McCutcheon
Sarah Keegan (PAC Secretariat)

1. Apologies - Members not present:

Judy McCullough – APTMA (pre-arranged)
Brian Nisbet – HEAnet (pre-arranged)
Paula Maguire – Enterprise Ireland (pre-arranged)
Joe Kane – Law Society

2. Minutes

It was confirmed that the Minutes from the December 16th 2015 meeting were published online, and that no further comment was received in relation to their content.

3. Policy Change – to allow 1 & 2 Letter .ie domains

The action point from the last meeting; to provide Registrars represented on the PAC with samples of marketing materials relevant to the launch of the secondary registration phase, Landrush, was

noted, and it was confirmed that this material was issued by the IEDR Business Development Team in January-February 2016.

A request was made by the Small Firms Association to ensure that all future marketing materials would be issued to their organisation also, in order to assist with the promotion of changes in the .ie namespace amongst their members.

Discussion centred on the progression of the Landrush phase, which launched on February 21st 2016.

The IEDR confirmed the number of applications received to date, in addition to the number of contested applications progressing to auction.

There was some discussion regarding the awareness of the one and two letter .ie domain release and the PAC requested further detail on the marketing activities that had been undertaken by the Registry.

The IEDR confirmed that their marketing campaign had comprised of a digital campaign (a dedicated set of banner ads) and a generic radio campaign, along with increased online activities, in the form of blog posts, and increased social media activity.

As previously advised by the Registry, it was noted that the IEDR is willing to undertake a co-funded marketing campaign with any of the accredited .ie Registrars, should they have any interest in doing so.

The IEDR confirmed that all Registrars and PAC Member Organisations are free to engage in their own marketing campaigns, if this was preferable.

Discussion then centred on the IEDR marketing materials made available to the accredited .ie Registrar Community, and it was requested that the IEDR work to design a dedicated online facility, where Registrars could obtain sample, customisable marketing materials, as per the operations of other ccTLD operators. The IEDR confirmed that it was in favour of this, and would engage with the Registrar Community, particularly through "Touch Meetings" and the Registrar Mailing Lists, in order to further investigate this.

The requirements for being listed as a Registrar, both for the standard accredited Registrar list on www.iedr.ie, and that applicable to the one and two letter .ie domain release, were queried. Discussion focused on whether qualifying criteria could be established, to ensure that all Registrars are operating a dedicated / relevant landing page for one and two letter domains, and can facilitate online orders. It was also requested that such a requirements list be published for the benefit of the Registrar Community.

The IEDR confirmed that such criteria were currently being drawn up, and that the Registry was working to implement this on a phased basis with the relevant Registrars. It further noted that the IEDR had no objections to the criteria being published to Registrars, once finalised.

A PAC member felt that these criteria would be best enforced at a set time, rather than on a phased basis. The IEDR agreed to review this matter further with the Business Development Team.

It was requested that the IEDR implement a random list of the participating Registrars for the one and two letter domain release on the iedr website. The IEDR confirmed that this matter was being reviewed internally by the Technical Department.

The IEDR thanked the Registrars for their feedback, confirming that all of the suggestions provided would be considered at length. It was further added by the IEDR that they would welcome any marketing suggestions for future releases.

4. Policy change – to allow IDNs (fadas on the vowels) in .ie domain names

The action points from the last meeting were discussed, and it was confirmed that the supporting documentation for the launch of the IDN Public Consultation had been issued to the Development Group members in January 2016, and that the Public Consultation had since been initiated on February 21st 2016, and will run for 30 days until March 21st 2016.

The marketing campaign to promote this was discussed, and the IEDR advised that it had contacted a number of agencies involved in the use of the Irish language to promote the consultation phase.

PAC members noted that the potential implementation of IDNs is a particularly positive development for the IE namespace, and should be heavily publicised in order to inform the public about their introduction.

Furthermore, there was agreement that should there be no serious concerns or objections raised during the consultation period, the Development Group could provide their recommendation for approval to the PAC via the email mailing list, so that the PAC can then forward their recommendation for implementation to the IEDR Board.

Discussion continued on the matter of public awareness of IDNs, and the preparedness of the Registrar Community for their implementation. It was agreed that it was vitally important to the success of the release to ensure Registrars were ready, and that the public and small business community were aware and informed about their release.

The technical processes associated with IDN operations were outlined, and the IEDR confirmed that it would be retaining a Punycode conversion tool on the website, www.iedr.ie, to assist Registrars with the registration of these domains.

The potential SEO impacts for a business changing their current domain to an IDN were discussed, along with potential browser and email provider considerations. It was noted that launching these domains before Registrars and the Irish Internet Community were prepared could lead to a poor user experience and potentially negative PR for all involved.

In light of these factors, it was agreed that a suitable timetable would need to be drawn up, which provided ample time for an educational and awareness campaign to be undertaken, ensuring that all Registrars, and interested applicants were informed and ready for the launch.

Proposed Timetable:-

- Public consultation ends on Monday, March 21st 2016
- Allow 14 days for the Development Group to review any feedback provided – ending on Monday, April 4th 2016

If no serious objections or concerns are raised during the Public Consultation, the following timeframes for various phases were discussed:

- Initiate an educational / awareness campaign for the benefit of Registrars and the general Public over a 45 day period (Ending on Thursday, May 19th 2016, based on a projected start date of April 5th 2016).
- Once this campaign has ended, it is proposed to provide a 30 day notice period to Registrars, advising of the launch of Sunrise (ending on Saturday, June 18th 2016).

The Irish Computer Society and Irish Internet Association both expressed a strong interest in potentially participating in the awareness campaign.

Discussion turned to the potential introduction of a “Founder’s phase”, whereby a small sample set of brands could apply for their IDN, with certain eligibility criteria associated with participation, most notably, guaranteed use of the IDN.

There was further consideration given to whether this phase would operate prior to Sunrise, or after Sunrise, however, it was noted that such programmes have historically operated prior to the launch of the Sunrise phase, in order to promote awareness and encourage uptake.

It was agreed that the IDN Development Group would further consider the pros and cons of a potential “Founders phase”, and seek consensus on whether it ought to be incorporated into the IDN release mechanism.

Updates on this will be provided at the next meeting.

It was also suggested that a sample IDN should be loaded into the production IEDR systems and zone file, rather than just a test environment, however the IEDR confirmed that a sample domain was already live in the form of éire.ie (xn—ire-gla.ie).

5. Policy change – to allow Secondary market / aftermarket in .ie domains

As noted at the last PAC meeting, the IEDR confirmed that it had continued legal consultation with regard to the mechanisms proposed to support potential secondary market operations.

The IEDR agreed that on the basis of the feedback received from solicitors to date, it was unlikely that any system of “pre-authentication” would be a mandatory requirement of the sale process.

It was further noted that legal discussions had progressed, and that word-crafting had begun on the phrasing of appropriate terms and conditions, along with the relevant IEDR protection measures / consumer protection notices that could be implemented to support this policy change.

In relation to the consumer protection mechanisms, it was noted that improvements to the site, www.iedr.ie, advising on the sale process, could be sufficient to address the risks arising from potential legal dispute that could occur, should a successful bidder be subsequently unable to satisfy the IEDR Registration Policies, having paid the vendor in good faith.

The IEDR further noted that legal opinion obtained to date indicated that the Registry could reduce the risks of legal dispute through alterations to certain warranty, indemnity and disclaimer terms and conditions, which legal counsel is reviewing.

The IEDR advised that a formal correspondence regarding the legal advice obtained would be issued to the Development Group and PAC within the coming weeks.

As discussion turned to the matter of a potential release timetable, the IEDR confirmed that the policy change could progress quickly in line with the IEDR Policy Development Process, once the final legal opinions have been obtained, and provided that the Registrar Agreement / Registrant terms and conditions can be updated to include supplemental clauses (relating to the mechanisms required to satisfactorily permit aftermarket operations), without the need to completely overhaul each agreement / terms and conditions.

As such, it was proposed and agreed to consider the Registrar Agreement and Policy / Process review as a separate change entirely to this policy change.

The IEDR further noted that an internal review of the IEDR Policies and Processes was currently being conducted, and updates would be provided to the PAC in due course.

Additionally, in response to requests to simplify the policy wording, particularly in the face of evolving consumer protection legislation, requiring policies to be understandable and easy to read, the IEDR confirmed that this would be reviewed, based on the updated consumer legislation in place, and feedback from the Registrars (through Touch Meetings, and the mailing list).

The request for a central policy location on the website, www.iedr.ie, was discussed, and the IEDR confirmed that policies are currently available through the legal tab on www.iedr.ie, and at <https://www.iedr.ie/about-the-iedr/our-policies/> However, it was agreed to continue to enhance the layout and positioning of this information, where possible, to improve the customer user experience.

6. Policy change – to remove restrictions on Geographical .ie domain names

A recap of the action items from the last meeting was provided, and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) confirmed that it had corresponded with the County and City Management Association (CCMA) to request their opinion on the proposed policy change and its implementation. DCENR advised that the CCMA would be expected to formally discuss the policy change next week.

Additionally, DCENR confirmed that it had also been in contact with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, where the Place Names Commission is established, and noted that they were also scheduled to discuss the matter at their next meeting in April 2016.

The PAC and Development Group responsible for reviewing this policy change proposal requested that DCENR provide any formal updates regarding this matter to the Geographic Development Group, as soon as they are available.

Additionally, the PAC Secretariat confirmed that the relevant mailing list address would be provided to the representatives from DCENR for this purpose.

There was discussion surrounding whether a timetable should be established, which would be inclusive of the agreed 90 day notice period before the implementation of this policy change, and for this to be communicated to the relevant Government Bodies.

However, it was noted that feedback from the relevant Government Departments and Agencies would be required before the PAC would be willing to fully approve and recommend the implementation of the policy change.

Further updates are expected to be communicated via the relevant mailing list, and at the next PAC meeting.

7. Policy change – to permit the registration of .ie domains which include the term “University”.

The action item from the last meeting was outlined for the benefit of the PAC, and it was confirmed by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources that they had obtained formal correspondence detailing the objections of the Department of Education to the proposed implementation of this policy change.

In light of the provision of this letter, and the lack of consensus associated with the policy change, the IEDR confirmed that it would withdraw the policy change proposal.

The PAC noted its appreciation to the Department of Communications for their efforts in this matter.

8. Policy change – to remove restrictions on .ie domain names corresponding to TLDs.

It was noted that the action item from the last meeting; the creation of the discussion document for the Development Group reviewing this matter, was in draft stage and was issued to the PAC with limited time for review prior to the meeting. The PAC Secretariat confirmed that a final version would be issued promptly.

Discussion centred on the matter of a small number of TLD extensions being restricted by the IEDR on the basis of consumer protection, or potential future commercial use by the Registry (specifically, 14 of the 676 possible two letter combinations corresponding to ccTLD extensions, and 13 domains that correspond to new gTLDs, of which 1223 are being released by ICANN.

It was noted that the IEDR had historically implemented a process of registering restricted domains to the Registry, in order to ensure applications for these gTLD domains could not be submitted.

In light of this, and in the interests of transparency, it was recommended that the IEDR review implementing and publishing a list of restricted domains reflecting ccTLDs / gTLDs. The IEDR confirmed that it was open to this proposal, and would review the matter internally.

Members of the PAC queried whether the IEDR still required a small number of the restricted domains, which also reflect gTLD extensions, and the IEDR advised that it was happy to review the restricted list. During further discussion, the IEDR confirmed that it had no objection to releasing the following restricted domains, in the light of the new gTLD expansion by ICANN.

- Coop.ie
- Mobi.ie
- Pin.ie
- Aero.ie

However, it was agreed that further consideration would need to be given to an appropriate release structure / timetable for these domains.

The PAC Secretariat confirmed that the Discussion Documentation would be edited to reflect the revised restricted list, and it was agreed that further updates regarding this policy change would be communicated through the relevant mailing list, and at the next meeting.

8. Policy change – to allow shortened versions of a person's first name with regard to Personal Name Domain applications

The action point from the last meeting was outlined, and it was confirmed that the PAC Secretariat had created and issued the requested Discussion Document to the Development Group.

However, the Development Group advised that they required more time for their deliberations, and agreed to provide an update through the relevant mailing list / PAC Secretariat and at the next PAC meeting.

9. Any Other Business

- **Agenda Topic Inclusion**

It was proposed to include a discussion item on the Agenda for the following meeting in relation to relevant industry related matters and legislative changes which have the potential to impact on the ie namespace and therefore be of interest to the PAC.

There was consensus for this, and accordingly, it was agreed that this matter will be included on the Agenda for future meetings.

- **Annual Report**

It was noted that the PAC Secretariat had drafted the requested Annual Report for the IEDR Board of Directors, outlining the operations of the PAC throughout 2015, which had been issued to the PAC for review.

Whilst the overall opinion of the document was positive, there was a request made to edit a portion of the wording contained within section 2c of the document, which related to the proposed policy change alteration to permit aftermarket operations.

As there was no objection raised to the proposed wording alteration, the PAC Secretariat confirmed that the requested change would be processed, and then distributed to the IEDR Board, together with the covering letter from the PAC Chairman.

There was agreement that the report would also be made available on www.iedr.ie.

The efforts of the PAC Secretariat were formally acknowledged by the Committee, which also expressed its appreciation for all of the provided assistance throughout 2015 / 2016.

- **Policy Conclusion Template**

A suggestion was made to create a Policy Conclusion Template, for use at the final implementation of a policy change, or in cases where the policy change request is withdrawn.

As there were no objections to this, the PAC Secretariat will arrange for its creation, and distribution of a draft to the PAC for review.

- **Working / Development Group Nominated Spokesperson**

In order to improve communications amongst the Development Groups and the PAC Secretariat / wider PAC, it was proposed to nominate a member from each Development Group to be responsible for liaising with the Secretariat.

Additionally, the PAC members were reminded to communicate with their “Mother Ship” and to inform their membership of developments, as appropriate/

There was full consensus for the proposal to nominate a spokesperson for each Development Group amongst the PAC members, and the PAC Secretariat offered to liaise with each of the Development Groups in the coming week to establish who will act as the nominated contact for each group.

A request was also submitted to the PAC Secretariat to publish the members of each Development Group to the wider PAC, which it was agreed would be arranged.

10. Next Steps:

- The IEDR will review PR and marketing requests of the PAC, including the improvement of a portal for Registrars where customisable materials could be obtained.
- The IEDR will continue to promote the release of one and two letter .ie domains, in addition to the IDN Public Consultation.
- The IEDR will develop educational and awareness marketing material in support of the potential release of Internationalised Domain Names.
- The IEDR will continue discussions with legal counsel regarding alterations to the Registrar / Registrant Agreements, along with all relevant Terms and Conditions in order to review potential operation mechanisms for a secondary market in the .ie namespace.
- DCENR to discuss the Geographic policy change with CCMA and Place Names Commission and provide updates to the relevant mailing lists at next meeting. (PAC Secretariat to provide the relevant mailing list information to DCENR).
- The PAC Secretariat will issue the updated Discussion Document to the TLD Development Group, requesting confirmation of their recommendation for the policy change to be implemented. Additionally, the group will be asked to recommend a release mechanism for the small number of previously restricted gTLD related names, and a suitable notice period before implementation of the policy.
- The PAC Secretariat will update the drafted Annual Report to include the requested edits, and will then forward to the IEDR Board of Directors. Additionally, the report will be made available on www.iedr.ie.
- The PAC Secretariat will draft the Policy Conclusion Template, and distribute to the PAC for review.
- The PAC Secretariat will liaise with the Working / Development Groups to note who will be the nominated spokesperson for each group.

11. Next Meeting: 10:30am on June 16th 2016.