

Nick Wenban-Smith, Candidate Statement for ICANN Board Seat 12

Firstly I would like to thank my nominee (.no) and seconder (.na) for having the confidence in me to put me forward for an ICANN board seat on behalf of the ccTLDs worldwide.

The role:

ICANN is a unique organisation, with particular importance to ccTLDs by virtue of its operation of the IANA root zone database and setting policies for us in relation to that function. The ccNSO has the privilege of appointing two directors to the ICANN board. Having spoken to current and previous members of the ICANN board, the role is challenging yet interesting and rewarding.

As we all know, ICANN's governance and accountability mechanisms are intricate and very complex. At the top of this structure sits the ICANN board, with sixteen voting members plus four non-voting liaisons. Over the past 25 years ICANN has been very successful in many regards as the global growth in digital services has accelerated. Nonetheless ICANN's incoming CEO faces a number of pressing issues, not least:

- A fiscal deficit, despite annual revenues of \$150 million
- An increasingly complex regulatory and geopolitical operating environment
- Laborious policy development processes which rely on a worryingly small number of key individuals who are generally employed by organisations with a strong vested interest
- A legal action from a former staff member, alleging harassment and discrimination

The ICANN board does not run the company, however it does set the overall strategy and ensures that organisation operates effectively and ethically. To do that it needs an experienced and diverse set of skills and experience around the boardroom table. I have direct experience at exec level of all the pressing issues listed above.

Motivation for standing:

I am a strong supporter of the multistakeholder model of Internet governance, and I want to see it succeed in the face of significant headwinds. In terms of ccNSO business and specifically the Policy Development Processes (PDP) I have been closely involved in this work for several years as a ccNSO Councillor and would work closely as board liaison with the ccNSO working groups to ensure that ccTLD perspectives are well understood at the ICANN board level. The Review Mechanism PDP unfortunately experienced a long list of further questions and points for clarification coming back from the board after a period of silence for over a year, and we should endeavour not to repeat that.

ICANN, ccTLDs and the DNS more widely are facing an increasingly active regulatory landscape. I believe my background as a European attorney, together with my many years of experience at a registry and within the ccNSO make me uniquely positioned to help the ICANN board navigate through that landscape.

Skills and prior experience:

Coming from the domain name industry, primarily from a ccTLD background, I am very knowledgeable about ICANN's history, processes, challenges and key participants. I have been a ccNSO Councillor for the past six years and benefited enormously from the ccNSO's exceptional geographic, linguistic and cultural diversity.

I have contributed to ccTLD policy development processes such as retirement of ccTLDs, review mechanisms against an adverse decision by the IANA function operator, and some gTLD policy groups e.g. Work Track 5 of the new gTLD program relating to the complex area of protection of geographic identifiers and abbreviations.

I have worked in Internet policy for my whole tenure at Nominet. Nominet has had to grapple with many of the same issues that currently face ICANN, for example:

- Increasing choice and competition;
- Registration data collection, processing, accuracy and legitimate access;
- Changes in technical protocols for registration systems;
- Dispute resolution mechanisms and review processes; and
- Managing incoming new regulations and government scrutiny (both EU and UK)

I have extensive experience of public speaking, including at many ICANN meetings. I have chaired sessions at ICANN on domain abuse in my capacity as Chair of ccNSO DNS Abuse Standing Committee. I am also regularly invited to speak at events and to government stakeholders and law enforcement. I have recently been an expert contributor to the current UDRP review, spoken about the impact of new EU NIS2 regulations on the domain name industry and previously represented the ICANN contracted registries and registrars in a cross community discussion on the implications of GDPR for ICANN stakeholders. I am very active in the CENTR community of EU based ccTLDs.

Through my role as the secretariat and lead organiser for the UK IGF I bring together members of many stakeholder groups including government, civil society, academic and technical communities. I am also currently chair and a founding member of the technical community coalition for multistakeholderism (TCCM) which has brought together numerous international members of the technical community to enable them to share resources and act as a point of coordination in the current ongoing UN processes.

Time commitment:

The time commitment is considerable, with the three annual in person meetings each year plus a further six board workshops, three days each. Including travel this equates to approximately 46 full days each year. In addition, there are weekly/ bi-weekly intersessional working groups and committee attendance. In total this means an average of two days each week and so this is not a standard non-executive appointment.

If elected, my employer Nominet UK has agreed that I will work for them part time with a flexible reduction in contracted hours in order that I may fulfil the role in line with the required time commitment and my fiduciary duties to ICANN as a director of the company. Nominet UK is already sufficiently staffed to absorb my stepping back, with two other full-time attorneys ready to pick up additional work.

Interests and declarations:

I am employed by Nominet UK, the ccTLD for the United Kingdom (.UK). Nominet is contracted with ICANN for the registry operation of two gTLDs, .cymru and .wales and is also one of ICANN's Emergency Backend Operator (EBERO) currently operating seven distressed gTLDs as an emergency service. We also provide gTLD registry services provision to a number of clients.