DISPUTE RESOLUTION SERVICE DECISION

Nancy Steidl v. Laura Budriene
Case No. DUK2026-0048

1. The Parties

1.1. The Complainant is Nancy Steidl, United Kingdom.

1.2. The Respondent is Laura Budriene, United Kingdom.

2. The Domain Name and Registry

2.1. The Registry of the disputed domain name <businessmission.co.uk> Nominet UK ("Nominet" or the "Registry").

3. Procedural History

3.1. The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the "Center") on 17 August 2026. On 17 August 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registry a request for registry verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On 18 August 2026, the Registry transmitted by email to the Center its verification response confirming that the Respondent is listed as the registrant and providing the contact details. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on 19 August 2026, requesting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amended Complaint on 21 August 2026.

3.2. The Center verified that the Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Dispute Resolution Service (the "Policy" or "DRS Policy").

3.3. In accordance with the Policy, paragraphs 3 and 6, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint on 25 August 2026. In accordance with the Policy, paragraph 7, the due date for Response was 16 September 2026. The Response was filed with the Center on 31 August 2026. The Respondent sent an email communication to the Center on 2 September 2026.

3.4. In accordance with the Policy, paragraph 9, the due date for the Complainant's Reply was 10 September 2026. The Complainant submitted a Reply on 8 September 2026.

3.5. The Parties were sent to mediation 9 September 2026. The Registry confirmed the mediation was unsuccessful on 15 October 2026.

3.6. The Complainant paid the fee for an expert decision on 26 October 2026.

3.7. The Center appointed Gill Grassie as the Expert in this matter on 30 October 2026. The Expert finds that it was properly constituted. The Expert has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Policy, paragraph 15.

4. Factual Background

4.1. The Complainant, Nancy Steidl, is the proprietor of registered UK trademark rights in THE BUSINESS MISSION, including:

UK00003293808 - an image mark including stylized words 'the business mission your business mission if you choose to accept it…' registered on 1st June 2018; and

UK00003561614 - a series word mark for 'The Business Mission' and 'the business mission' registered on 9th April 2021, both registered for services falling within Classes 35 and 41, which are relevant to business, networking, promotional and event-related activities (together 'the Marks').

4.2. The Complainant acquired the domain names thebusinessmission.com and thebusinessmission.co.uk in 2018. The Respondent registered the disputed domain name businessmission.co.uk (the 'Domain Name') on 18 June 2025.

4.3. The Lithuanian Chamber of Commerce in the United Kingdom Limited ("LCCUK") used the Domain Name subsequently in connection with a LCCUK event ('the Event') promoted under the name BUSINESS MISSION. The Complainant raised concerns with LCCUK regarding its use of BUSINESS MISSION and the disputed domain name in connection with the Event. LCCUK subsequently changed the branding of the Event and ceased using BUSINESS MISSION.

4.4. Nominet confirmed to the Complainant, following a request for disclosure that the Respondent is the registrant and contact for the disputed domain name. The Respondent is also a director of LCCUK and holds a senior position within this organization.

4.5. The Complainant seeks transfer of the disputed domain name.

5. Parties' Contentions

5.1. The Complaint

The Complainant's key allegations are summarized below.

Rights

The Complainant relies on her established THE BUSINESS MISSION brand, corresponding domain names (registered in 2018) and trademarks (registered in 2018 2021), (together 'the Brand'), which predate the registration of the Domain Name on 18 June 2025. The disputed domain name reproduces the dominant and distinctive wording of the Brand.

Abusive Registration

The Complainant relies on the Respondent's directorship and senior role within LCCUK, together with LCCUK's acknowledged use of the disputed domain name for an event promoted as BUSINESS MISSION ('the Event'). She submits that this use was likely to suggest a connection with, or authorization by, her business. She does not assert that the Respondent registered the disputed domain name as LCCUK's agent or nominee but asks the Expert to assess the registration and use objectively in their full context.

The similarity of the disputed domain name to the Brand means the former is consequently capable of being understood by members of the public as being associated with, connected to, authorized by, or operated by the proprietor of THE BUSINESS MISSION. This similarity is particularly significant because the disputed domain name has actually been used in connection with business event activities, rather than merely existing as an unused registration.

She states that LCCUK did not answer her specific questions about whether it instructed, authorized, approved, funded or otherwise participated in the registration. In its response of 31 August 2026, LCCUK said it did not currently use, operate or control the disputed domain name and would not use it for future activities. It acknowledged historical use for an LCCUK event and confirmed that current materials were hosted at "www.ltkforum.co.uk" under the Lithuania–United Kingdom Business Forum identity.

The Complainant submits that rebranding and cessation of use do not erase the historical circumstances or resolve the continued registration, which remains capable of renewal, reactivation or future use. She seeks transfer of the disputed domain name.

5.2 The Respondent's Response

The Respondent's key submissions are summarized below.

The Respondent denies abusive or bad-faith registration or use and opposes transfer, cancellation or suspension. She says the disputed domain name descriptively named a genuine planned LCCUK Lithuania–United Kingdom business mission and forum. As an LCCUK director with over ten years' digital-project experience who manages more than 20 domains for different legitimate business, website and client projects, she considers the registration of the disputed domain name consistent with her professional practice. Therefore, the registration of the disputed domain name was not unusual, suspicious or directed at the Complainant. The fact that the Respondent manages several domain names should not be treated as evidence of abusive conduct. On the contrary, it reflects her professional activity in website development and digital project management.

Even if the Complainant has certain rights in the Brand, this does not automatically mean that the Complainant has a monopoly over every descriptive use of the words “business mission”. The Respondent did not use the words “business mission” as the Complainant’s trademark or brand. The words were used descriptively to describe the nature of the LCCUK event. The Respondent does not operate a business under the name “The Business Mission” and does not seek to impersonate the Complainant. “Business mission” commonly describes trade delegations, business visits, forums and networking. The Event involved networking, B2B meetings, regional presentations, institutional and diplomatic participation and trade cooperation. She distinguishes those activities from the Complainant’s apparent consultancy, strategy, legal, intellectual property and related services, and knows of no comparable Lithuania–UK missions organized by the Complainant.

The Respondent says she neither knew of nor targeted the Complainant at registration or during use, and intended no sale, blocking, disruption, impersonation, deception or diversion. She denies that users would necessarily associate the descriptively named Event with the Complainant. She disputes having been clearly approached directly at the outset by the Complainant, saying she received the letter dated 23 August 2026 from the Complainant on or around 27 August 2026. She considers repeated communications by the Complainant to LCCUK contacts and the Lithuanian Embassy, short deadlines and demands backed by threats of proceedings to be disproportionate. She says reasonable time for a response and practical optionsclarifying Event identification, distinguishing the parties’ activities, coexistence or consensual transfer—were not adequately explored.

The Respondent says she and LCCUK made goodwill changes at their expense to reduce conflict and possible confusion, without admitting liability or abusive registration or use. They remain willing to clarify the website’s identification of LCCUK and the specific Lithuania–United Kingdom event. She requests rejection of the Complaint and retention of the disputed domain name.

5.3 Reply to the Response

The Complainant’s key submissions in reply are summarized below.

The Complainant disputes the claimed distinction between the parties’ activities, relying on evidence that THE BUSINESS MISSION also runs business networking events. She accepts that “business mission” can have a descriptive meaning but submits that the issue is its particular adoption as the Event name and corresponding disputed domain name, not ordinary descriptive usage elsewhere.

The Respondent’s confirmation that the Respondent is an LCCUK director and registered and used the disputed domain name for the Event alone does not establish abuse, and the Complainant does not speculate about the Respondent’s state of mind. Instead, she asks the Expert to weigh the denial of knowledge against the objective circumstances, including the Event’s activities and subsequent branding changes. She does not treat those changes as an admission of infringement but says they do not resolve the registration and use.

The Complainant rejects the Respondent’s account of first being clearly approached in August 2026. She claims that the Respondent was copied into the Final Notice Before Proceedings on 24 July 2026 and expressly identified as the disputed domain name’s registered holder and an LCCUK director.

She maintains that the registration and subsequent use, considered together, constitute Abusive Registration and requests transfer of the disputed domain name to her.

6. Discussion and Findings

Under section 2 of the DRS Policy the onus is on the Complainant to prove to the Expert on the balance of probabilities each of the two elements set out in sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 of the Policy, namely that the Complainant has Rights in respect of a name or mark which is identical or similar to the disputed domain name; and that the disputed domain name, in the hands of the Respondent, is an Abusive Registration.

6.1. Rights

Section 1 of the Policy provides that Rights means "rights enforceable by the Complainant, whether under English law or otherwise, and may include rights in descriptive terms which have acquired a secondary meaning". Rights may be established in a name or mark by way of a trademark registered in an appropriate territory, or by a demonstration of unregistered 'common law rights.' The Complainant has provided evidence as to her name, business and trademark rights. The Expert is satisfied that the Complainant has Rights within the meaning of the Policy in the Brand. In any event the Respondent has not denied the existence of the Complainant's Rights.

Based upon the evidence provided, the Expert is of the opinion that whilst the Complainant has sufficient Rights to found a Complaint, those Rights are not particularly strong. In particular, as indicated below the Brand has strong descriptive connotations and there is nothing before the Expert to show that the Brand is widely known. However, as indicated, the Complainant has done enough to pass the first hurdle under the Policy.

Rights being established, the Brand still requires to be identical or similar to the disputed domain name. It is accepted practice to discount the .co.uk suffix and the only other difference is the omission of 'the' before that suffix. The word 'the' is merely use of the definite article, and its omission does little to distinguish the disputed domain name from the Brand and its association with the Complainant. Taking this into account it follows in the Expert's view that the omission of 'the' is not sufficient to make the Domain Name dissimilar to the Brand. Accordingly, the Expert finds that the disputed domain name is similar to the Brand.

Accordingly, based on consideration of the evidence presented, the Expert finds that the Complainant has Rights in respect of a name or mark that is identical or similar to the disputed domain name.

6.2. Abusive Registration

Under paragraph 1 of the Policy, Abusive Registration means a domain name that either:

"i. was registered or otherwise acquired in a manner which, at the time when the registration or acquisition took place, took unfair advantage of or was unfairly detrimental to the Complainant's Rights; or ii. is being used or has been used in a manner which has taken unfair advantage of or has been unfairly detrimental to the Complainant's Rights."

Prior Knowledge and Abusive Registration

In order to establish an Abusive Registration a Complainant generally needs to show on the balance of probabilities that the Respondent was aware of the Complainant and/or its rights in a mark identical or similar to the disputed domain name at the time it was registered or acquired and that it intended to target the Complainant or its trademark. This was the view of the Appeal Panel in Verbatim Ltd v. Michael Toth DRS 04331 ("Verbatim") which stated that 'some knowledge of the Complainant or its name/brand is a pre-requisite for a successful complaint under all heads of the DRS Policy (save for a complaint under paragraph 3(a)(iv))[giving false

contact details].(...)for this complaint to succeed, the Complainant must satisfy the Panel, as an opener, that the Respondent was aware of the existence of the Complainant or its brand at the date of registration of the Domain Name or at commencement of an objectionable use'.

The Appeal Panel also stated that in its view 'the Panel cannot at present conceive of any circumstances under which a domain name registrant, wholly unaware of the Complainant and its Rights, can be said to be taking unfair advantage of or causing unfair detriment to the Complainant's Rights…. when a Respondent denies all knowledge of the Complainant and/or its Rights at the relevant time, that denial is not necessarily the end of the matter. The credibility of that denial will be scrutinised carefully in order to discern whether, on the balance of probabilities, the relevant degree of knowledge or awareness was present.'

The Respondent, in that case, as here, argued that they only heard of the Complainant and its Rights when they received the Complainant's notification of its contentions. The Appeal Panel also made it clear that if that denial of prior knowledge was accepted, only the use of the disputed domain name following receipt of that notification was relevant.

The Expert considers there is no clear evidence that demonstrates such prior knowledge in this case and the Respondent denies knowing or targeting the Complainant at registration or during use. Nor is there evidence that the Brand had any exclusive association with the Complainant at the time of registration. The Brand in the Expert's view and as accepted by the Complainant is descriptive and her Reply seems to suggest that her Complaint is about the particular adoption of the term for the Event. It is not unreasonable to consider that the choice of the Domain Name was made independently by the Respondent because of its ordinary descriptive meaning and because it matched the nature of the planned LCCUK event. A shared name, a similar field of activity and a shared timeline do not by themselves establish targeting. Such an independent choice and lack of prior knowledge is also supported by the very limited extent of the Complainant's goodwill as dealt with below.

The Complainant has not produced any evidence to demonstrate that the Brand was well known or had a reputation by the way of turnover, sales, clients or expenditure on advertising that would make it likely that the Respondent knew of it. The Expert has conducted some research into matters which are in the public domain (see Paragraph 18.1 of the Policy). She found a UK company named The Business Mission Ltd number 12936819 with the Complainant as a Director registered on 08 October 2020 and voluntarily struck off on 16 March 2021 with no accounts having been registered. The Complainant does have a website at "https://www.thebusinessmission.com" ('the Website') but does not appear to have one at the "www.businessmission.co.uk/". The Website suggests that the Complainant is still active, listing a number of clients and testimonials and is promoting an event on 9th December 2026. Wayback machine at "www.web.archive.org/web/20260000000000*/thebusinessmission.com"shows that the Website was saved 52 times between 7th August 2018 and 17th July 2025. The Complainant has a LinkedIn entry under the Brand, and this suggests that the Complainant is the only employee and that it has 591 followers. "www.uk.linkedin.com/company/thebusinessmission"

Whilst the Complainant owns the Marks and has operated since 2018 under the Brand the evidence suggests that she has a small independent business which is not particularly well known or with a significant reputation or goodwill. The Complainant herself accepts that the Brand is descriptive and she has not offered evidence that it has a secondary meaning exclusively associated with her.

She suggests that the denial of knowledge by the Respondent should be weighed objectively against all circumstances, including the evidence linking the Domain Name, LCCUK and the Event, and subsequent conduct concerning disputed branding. However, the Expert considers that the use of the Domain Name for the Event by LCCUK is more supportive of the contention that it was chosen because it described that Event rather than to target the Complainant or take advantage of her goodwill.

However, it is conceivable that the Respondent on making her application for the Domain Name came across one or both of the Complainant's domain names in a search. The Domain Name is very similar to the Complainant's Brand and only omits the word 'the' and so it is possible that the Respondent saw the Complainant's domain names in her search and could not register 'thebusinessmission.co.uk' and so omitted the definite article to secure the Domain Name. If that occurred, whilst the Respondent would have had prior knowledge of the existence of one or both of the Complainant's domain names she is unlikely to have had knowledge of the Brand given the limited goodwill in it as above. Under *Verbatim*, knowledge of the Brand is the question. In any event there is no obligation on a domain name registrant to carry out prior trademark clearance searches, and the Nominet Policy is first come first served. The Expert concludes on a balance of probabilities that the Respondent did not know of the Complainant or the Brand but even if she did, did not know of the Marks or the Brand and in accordance with *Verbatim* there can be no Abusive Registration.

6.3. Abusive Use

As the Appeal Panel in Verbatim also made it clear that if that denial of prior knowledge was accepted, only the use of the disputed domain name following receipt of the notification was relevant.

The Expert has also considered the Complainant's arguments on use as follows:

1. The similarity of disputed domain name to the Brand means the former is capable of being understood by members of the public as being associated with, connected to, authorized by, or operated by the proprietor of the Brand. This similarity is particularly significant because the disputed domain name has actually been used in connection with business event activities, rather than merely existing as an unused registration.

The Expert agrees that the public could be confused and believe that the disputed domain name is associated with the Complainant. However, given that it is accepted that the Brand is descriptive, the goodwill in it is limited, and there is no secondary meaning attached to it, the Expert considers the risk of such confusion is minimal. The Complainant produced no evidence of actual confusion, such as misdirected enquiries, attendees or sponsors who believed there was a connection, or comments to that effect. Her case rests on the possibility of confusion arising from similarity and overlap in the business events field. That similarity is a real consideration, and the parties' activities do overlap to some degree, since the Complainant's evidence shows she also runs networking events. But the Expert is not persuaded that confusion was likely, given the descriptive character of the Brand and the clearly LCCUK-focused nature of the Event.

2. LCCUK did not answer her specific questions about whether it instructed, authorized, approved, funded or otherwise participated in the registration of the disputed domain name and rebranding and cessation of use do not erase the historical circumstances or resolve the continued registration, which remains capable of renewal, reactivation or future use.

The Expert notes that LCCUK have undertaken not to use the disputed domain name. However, the Respondent is the registrant, has control of the disputed domain name and has given no such undertaking. It is therefore correct that there is a risk of renewal, reactivation or future use if it remains with the Respondent.

Under the DRS Experts' Overview paragraph 4.7 it states: 'Is it possible for a Respondent to make fair use of a domain name where (a) that name is also the Complainant's trademark and (b) the Respondent's use of the domain name is causing confusion?(...) Yes(….) Another use, which may not be regarded as unfair within the terms of the DRS Policy, is where the Complainant's name or mark is a dictionary word or a combination of dictionary words and not well-known and the Respondent reasonably registered and has been using the domain name in ignorance of the Complainant's rights. In such circumstances, if the confusion is likely to be very limited, an Expert might conclude that it would be unjust to deprive the Respondent of his domain name. [The Appeal decision in DRS 04889 (wiseinsurance.co.uk)]. However, there is a view among some Experts (albeit a minority) that a confusing use which is likely to constitute trademark infringement cannot be anything other than unfair.'

The Expert has found that the Complainant's goodwill in the Brand is very limited, and the Complainant offers no rebuttal of the Respondent's assertion that she was unaware of the Brand at registration or use. The Expert finds that the Respondent registered the disputed domain name reasonably and LCCUK used it in ignorance of the Complainant's Rights/the Brand.

In all these circumstances any past or future confusion is likely to be very low indeed. The past use was genuine. It was in connection with a real, planned event and was not parked, pay-per-click or a sale listing. Paragraph 8.1.1.1 of the Policy recognises fair use in connection with a genuine offering before the Respondent is aware of the cause for complaint, and paragraph 8.1.2 recognises fair use of a generic or descriptive domain name. The Expert has found that the Domain Name was used descriptively for the Event as a genuine event and on the balance of probabilities such use was before the Respondent was aware of the Brand or the cause for complaint.

The Complainant raised her concerns with LCCUK, which changed the Event's branding, stopped using BUSINESS MISSION and moved to the LT–UK Forum identity. The Expert does not read this as an admission, and the Respondent expressly makes none. It merely shows a reasonable response to a complaint, and it is consistent with the Respondent's good faith.

Given that the Complainant has adopted a descriptive name for her business she cannot, without more extensive rights, complain about the use of the same or similar descriptive name by a third party. Whether any future use may be trademark infringement or not is not an issue for the Expert to decide under the DRS Policy as a summary procedure based in contract and is better dealt with by the Courts. Furthermore, the Expert is not in the minority of Experts mentioned in the DRS Experts' Overview paragraph 4.7. and considers it would be unjust to deprive the Respondent of the disputed domain name.

6.4. Conclusion on Abusive Registration.

Weighing the evidence as a whole, the Complainant has not shown on the balance of probabilities that the Domain Name, in the hands of the Respondent, is an Abusive Registration. The Expert reaches this view with some sympathy for the Complainant's position. The overlap in field and the initial similarity of the Event name to her brand are real. But the Policy requires more than similarity and overlap, and in this case the more is missing.

6.5. Reverse Domain Name Hijacking**.**

For completeness the Respondent complains of disproportionate pressure but has not asked for a finding of Reverse Domain Name Hijacking. The Complainant holds registered Rights, there was overlapping use, and the Complaint was brought in a reasonable attempt to protect the Brand. The Expert makes no such finding.

7. Decision

7.1. The Complainant has established Rights in a name or mark similar to the disputed domain name but has not established that the disputed domain name, in the hands of the Respondent, is an Abusive Registration. For the foregoing reasons, the Expert orders that no action be taken in respect of the disputed domain name <businessmission.co.uk>.

Gill Grassie
Expert
Date: 12 November 2026