



## News Release

11/10

18 February 2010

### **CC PROVISIONALLY CLEARS BRIGHTSOLID/FRIENDS REUNITED MERGER**

The Competition Commission (CC) has provisionally cleared the anticipated acquisition of Friends Reunited Holdings Ltd (Friends Reunited) from ITV plc by Brightsolid Group Limited (Brightsolid), after concluding that the tie-up poses no threat to customers of online genealogy services. A summary of the provisional findings is now available on the CC's [website](#). The full report will be published on the website within the next few days.

Brightsolid, which runs websites Find My Past.com and 1911 Census.com, and Friends Reunited, which owns Genes Reunited.com, are two of the three largest suppliers of online genealogy services in the UK. These websites allow users to search and access historical information and documents such as census results, birth, marriage and death records, and also supply family tree software.

Chairman of the Inquiry Group and CC Deputy Chairman, Laura Carstensen, said:

The increasing interest people have in tracing their family history means that this is a rapidly growing market with an estimated 2 million people accessing a number of genealogy websites every month. The Internet is now by far the preferred way to trace family history: for example, the ratio of online to onsite delivery of The National Archives was about 200:1 over the last year. So we've looked closely at how the merger might affect competition in this market and the interests of this growing number of customers.

We found that while there is a degree of overlap in the activities of the two companies, it is small and their business models are different, and in the absence of the merger would be likely to remain so. After the merger another website, Ancestry.co.uk, will remain the largest supplier in this market and its presence, along with potential entry by new suppliers and the alternatives provided by free sites, will ensure that the merged company faces strong competition—preventing it from raising prices or worsening the service it provides.

In fact, the merger could potentially benefit amateur family historians as the merged company will be better equipped to compete directly with Ancestry.co.uk, leading to more innovation and improvements in the market.

The case was [referred](#) by the Office of Fair Trading on 2 November last year and the CC has been asked to decide whether the acquisition may be expected to result in a substantial lessening of competition within any market or markets in the UK.

The CC is expected to publish its final report by 16 April 2010 and would like to hear comments on the provisional findings from any interested parties, in writing, by 11 March 2010. To submit comments, please email [brightsolidfriendsre@cc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:brightsolidfriendsre@cc.gsi.gov.uk) or write to:

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### **Notes for editors**

1. The CC is an independent public body, which carries out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries.
2. The Enterprise Act 2002 empowers the Office of Fair Trading to refer to the CC completed or proposed mergers for investigation and report which create or enhance a 25 per cent share of supply in the UK (or a substantial part thereof) or where the UK turnover associated with the enterprise being acquired is over £70 million.
3. The members of the Brightsolid/Friends Reunited Inquiry Group are: Laura Carstensen (Group Chairman), Robin Mason, Ed Smith and Anthony Stern.
4. The CC has a 24-week period in which it is required to publish its report, which may be extended by no more than eight weeks if it considers that there are special reasons why the report cannot be published within that period.
5. Further information on this inquiry, including the terms of reference and other key documents, as well as on the CC and its procedures, including its policy on the provision of information and the disclosure of evidence, can be obtained from the CC website at: [www.competition-commission.org.uk](http://www.competition-commission.org.uk).
6. Enquiries should be directed to [Rory Taylor](#) or [John Park](#) or by ringing 020 7271 0242.