The Internet is a large network, a global connection of many computer networks and single computers connected together to share information. It was originally designed and developed by a US defence organisation and has now grown into a worldwide network of networks. The main problem people see with the internet is that it is not regulated and controlled or owned by anyone. It can be freely accessed by anyone with a computer and an internet connection. Since the Internet is not owned by anyone or any organisation then there is some disagreement over who regulates and can control the content of the Internet. This can lead to many problems; the main being that minors can have access to unsuitable material such as pornography and scenes of violence etc.

The fact that there are currently no boundaries or rules relating to the Internet and large networks means that the use of the international law is very difficult and often unclear. However, several acts have been passed by the government to help try and control what users of the Internet have access to and can do. Although a lot of the law surrounding the internet is unclear, the points covered by these laws are very clear and precise and these laws affect anyone using computers in Britain.

The Computer Misuse Act (1990) was set up to stop the unauthorised access to computer systems and seeing or modifying restricted computer files or data. It also makes the use of programs that destroy computer systems, known as viruses, illegal. They can be accidentally downloaded from the Internet as these programs can be disguised as other files.

The Data Protection Act (1998) was set up to make sure that any information stored electronically is kept accurate and up-to-date so that incorrect data is not stored on computer systems and that the data stored is only relevant to the organisations needs. It also means that anyone or any organisation wanting to store information on people have to register with the Data Protection Act Registrar so they can be known as official data holders and they must make sure that the data stored is always kept accurate.

The Copyright Act (1988) was passed so that no unauthorised copies of material are created and sold illegally. You are allowed to create one backup copy of software you have purchased for your own use but when it comes to software downloaded from the internet there can be some confusion. Most large organisations webpages have been copyrighted but by visiting web pages the information is automatically stored on your computer so some people can be breaking the act by using these certain pages on a network.

I think that Acts such as these are needed to make sure the Internet is used correctly and that damage is not done to people or systems. However I do not think that the ownership of the Internet should be given to any person or organisation to decide if a website or its content is acceptable for use on the Internet.

I think instead of regulation laws, more emphasis should be on self-regulation to control the content of the internet yourself to your own requirements. If for example you have children or minors who you believe can access unsuitable material then there is plenty of software and programs available to help monitor and restrict access to certain websites and areas. These programs can filter out and block certain levels of content and can be freely downloaded from the Internet.

Some people complain that when they search for some innocent topic using a search engine they are bombarded with pornographic adverts and images. With use of these filtering programs and a little more common sense, encountering these unwanted occurrences shouldn't be a problem. In conclusion I believe the way the Internet operates at present, is fine, as with all the free filtering and blocking software available there shouldn't be a problem with minors accessing inappropriate material.