

[Our year in our words](#)

Fulfilling our mission, focusing on the future

“HM Land Registry and its staff have needed to display flexibility, resilience and creativity to continue to deliver our vital function in support of the property market, and the wider economy.” Simon Hayes, Chief Executive and Chief Land Registrar

Our mission is to guarantee land and property rights in England and Wales. In a year of political unpredictability and economic uncertainty compounded by the coronavirus pandemic, we continued to fulfil this central task while maintaining our focus on the modernisation of our organisation and services. We responded to more than 35 million requests for service during the year, including 5.9 million changes to the register, 20.7 million guaranteed queries and 7.8 million information services requests, and made further advances in providing digital services and publishing data.

Coping with coronavirus

“The critical role of land registration in property transactions continued through the national crisis.” Michael Mire, Chair

The coronavirus pandemic was a challenge for every business and organisation. When the country was put into lockdown, we went from an entirely office-based and historically localised operation to a remote-working national function in a matter of weeks. Many transactions continued uninterrupted while more than 5,000 colleagues were enabled to work from home for the first time. They are now fully equipped to deliver land registration remotely. At the same time we made a number of changes to our practices to help our customers, relaxing submission deadlines and enabling the use of new technology for verifying identity and submitting documents to us.

Serving our customers

“Customers recognised we still provided them with a really good service even though we are in the process of transforming and overcoming some operational challenges.” Chris Pope, Chief Operations Officer

We aim for excellence in the service we provide to our customers. Our overall customer satisfaction rating for the year was 90%, meaning nine out of ten customers rated our services as good, very good or excellent. Our Customer Support Centre has been transformed through improved technology and a dedicated training team for our advisers. It handled close to a million calls and processed 196,055 emails in 2019/20. Nearly 95% of our services are delivered via our online business portals and more than 83.6% of customer

requests are fully automated.

Transforming ourselves and conveyancing

**“Our digital transformation focuses on receiving verified digital data from our customers, which can enable their request to be processed in a way that eliminates manual administrative tasks.”
Andrew Trigg, Acting Director of Digital, Data and Technology**

We have an ambitious approach to digital transformation, aiming not just to transform ourselves but also to enable digital conveyancing. This year we have been trialling a new Digital Registration Service in preparation for its launch this summer. It will enable customers to complete forms using digital fields that will validate the information they enter before it is submitted to us. Our caseworkers are meanwhile starting to benefit from a new application processing system which replaces the 20-plus systems they were using daily. We are also employing robotic processing to speed up casework and we’re testing how artificial intelligence can further reduce time-consuming manual tasks. Our ‘Sign your mortgage deed’ digital mortgage service has shown we can create an innovative service that leading market providers such as HSBC and Santander wanted to promote as part of the digital offering to their customers. Nearly 10,000 remortgages have so far been registered.

Building a new register

“Joining the Local Land Charges Register has meant that we no longer have to provide search results ourselves as the information is available from the central, digital register and easily accessible to our customers.” Ben Martin, Interim Head of Planning and Building Control, Watford Borough Council

Our digital Local Land Charges service is a prime example of us improving the wider conveyancing process. Our programme is transforming a fragmented service delivered by more than 300 local authorities into a single online register of local land charges across England and Wales. A further four local authorities joined the new service in 2019/20, bringing the number of charges transferred to the central register to 358,935. For the local authorities migrated so far, the average time to access information has fallen from 39 days to a few minutes and the average cost to the buyer has been cut from £23.75 to £15.

Instilling confidence, fighting fraud

“Last year we dealt with almost 6 million applications to change the register. Each time we must ensure we are dealing with the owners themselves and not a fraudster, and we must accurately

reflect the true new picture of property law rights that the parties have agreed.” Mike Harlow, General Counsel, Deputy Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Land Registrar

Clarity and security of land ownership is essential to a functioning property market, which is in turn vital to the economy generally. The security and accuracy of our registers is thus of national importance. This year we introduced a new state-of-the-art fraud management system to enhance our fraud resilience while continuing to provide protection to the victims of fraud and unforeseen errors in the register. In 2019/20 we paid £2.1 million in compensation for fraud and £3.2 million for inaccuracy. The total compensation was just 0.00008% of the total value of property in the register.

Working towards comprehensive registration

“By working closely with HM Land Registry, we were able to complete the registration exercise efficiently and cost effectively.” Clive Ball, Head of Property, NHS Wales

Our ambitions include aiming to achieve comprehensive registration by 2030. Just under 87.5% of the land mass of England and Wales is currently registered and we continually add to the total by working with land and property owners. In 2019/20 we completed 77,997 first registrations, adding an estimated 120,000 hectares of land with a value estimated at more than £10 billion. NHS Wales and the Humberside, Leicestershire, West Yorkshire and Cumbria police forces were among the owners who completed the registration of their property and we are working in partnership with Network Rail on a pilot project for the registration of the whole of its infrastructure and estate, including stations and track.

Addressing inequalities, creating inclusivity

**“I am incredibly pleased to work with a group of committed individuals who care deeply about addressing inequalities and creating an inclusive culture throughout the organisation.”
Karina Singh, Director of Transformation**

We want to be the most inclusive employer in government, ensuring fair and equal opportunities for all. Our staff networks play an important role in helping us to develop the best policies to support and drive these ambitions. The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Network, Assured (our network for sexual orientation and gender identity), The Age Network, the Women’s Network, the Disabled Employee Network and the Faith and Belief Network empower our people and help to make HM Land Registry a great place to work.

Investing in our people

“I’m delighted to be taking up this new role and repaying the support and investment that HM Land Registry has made in my career.” Alken Brookes, Assistant Land Registrar

Our expert people are our most valuable asset. That is why we are addressing a decade’s worth of underinvestment in them, aiming to provide the best possible training and opportunities. This year we implemented a new system to support their personal learning and development and provide access to career development options. So far 21,698 courses have been completed. An average of 4.8 days per person was spent on training, with 83% of colleagues indicating they had the skills needed to do their job. We celebrated Alken Brookes becoming the first of our experienced caseworker legal apprentices to graduate as a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives and become an HM Land Registry lawyer.

Supporting good causes

“The commitment, energy and enthusiasm of our volunteers demonstrate HM Land Registry values in practice and the best of our culture.” Simon Morris, Director of Human Resources

Our people are active and engaged in their work and home communities. The efforts of our network of volunteers who coordinate sports and social activities and charity endeavours saw £88,116 raised for good causes over the year and nearly a quarter of all colleagues participating in some organised activities. Our sustainability champions planted trees to support biodiversity and set up milk clubs and a shopping bag loan scheme to reduce our impact on the environment.

[Read the full Annual Report and Accounts.](#)