

# UK statement on the priorities for Sweden's 2021 OSCE Chairpersonship

Mr Chairperson,

The UK warmly welcomes the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Permanent Council and thanks him for outlining the priorities for Sweden's 2021 OSCE Chairpersonship. Please be assured of the UK's full support for the agenda you have set out today.

The UK remains a strong proponent of the OSCE and we believe it has much potential. The organisation remains a critical multilateral institution for European and Euro-Atlantic security. The current COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented additional challenges to the organisation and to the OSCE region. It has also required us to think and work differently. On this, we thank the Albanian Chair for his leadership and we welcome Sweden's intention to continue and build on these these new and more sustainable ways of working.

Yet, Mr Chairperson, we are deeply concerned that in only two days time the Secretariat and autonomous institutions will be leaderless. This is troubling at a time of global pandemic when continuity should have been paramount.

We support your focus on the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, which must remain at the organisation's heart and form the basis of everything we do.

You are right to attach the highest priority to conflict resolution. Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine remains one of the biggest security threats facing the OSCE area. We reiterate our call on Russia to end its illegal annexation of Crimea, stop fuelling the conflict in eastern Ukraine and ensure that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission is able to access the entire territory of Ukraine, in accordance with its mandate. This conflict must continue to command our full attention – we owe this to the millions of Ukrainians who have been affected by it.

We also owe it to the people affected by protracted conflicts in the OSCE region to redouble our efforts to find peaceful solutions, in full respect of OSCE principles and commitments. We cannot be content with a situation where civilians find themselves at risk from shelling when tensions escalate, as we saw at the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan this week. Where Georgian civilians continue to be detained arbitrarily in the Georgian breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Or, when the lives of ordinary Moldovans are disrupted by restrictions on crossing the "internal boundary line."

We look forward to marking the 10th anniversary of Ministerial Council Decision 3/11 – an opportunity to recognise the excellent work done by the

OSCE's field missions, autonomous institutions and Secretariat as well as to reflect on how we might strengthen and make better use of the OSCE's impressive conflict cycle toolbox. A comprehensive approach to security means upholding OSCE principles and commitments and preventing and challenging abuse of power.

Sweden will assume responsibilities of the Chair thirty years after the Paris Summit, which our predecessors described as a time "for fulfilling the hopes and expectations our peoples have cherished for decades" including a "steadfast commitment to democracy based on human rights and fundamental freedoms."

We recognised in Paris in 1991 that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is an "essential safeguard against an over-mighty State. Their observance and full exercise are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace."

As you set out, human rights and fundamental freedoms are challenged across the OSCE region. The UK aligns with the Swedish steadfast approach to the their promotion and protection.

I commend Sweden's focus on Women, Peace and Security. It is well known that the meaningful participation of women brings more informed decision-making, more sustainable results on the ground, and is key to achieving durable peace. At the OSCE, we must do better. We must implement UNSCR 1325. We must ensure that women are represented among OSCE mediators at all levels in the relevant formats related to conflicts.

We also appreciate the planned focus on women's economic participation recognising the particular economic vulnerabilities women face, including during the pandemic.

Ensuring a society where individuals enjoy the same opportunities, rights, obligations and security regardless of their gender is not only the right thing to do – it benefits all of us. Gender equality is fundamental to lasting poverty reduction, and to building prosperous, resilient economies and peaceful, stable societies.

We will work with you too to ensure that the OSCE's Confidence and Security Building Measures continue to operate effectively to reduce the risk of armed conflict and of misunderstanding or miscalculation of military activities. We must find a way to make some meaningful progress on Vienna Document Modernisation. The UK remains committed to the Open Skies Treaty.

Transnational and cyber security threats will remain challenges in the OSCE area to which we need comprehensive responses. And Corruption and environmental challenges will continue to undermine the stability of our societies.

In all of this, Sweden can rely on the strong support of the UK and we wish you all the best for your Chairpersonship.

Thank you.

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# [A year of transformation, inclusion and continuity in crisis](#)

Press release

Today we have launched our Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20: Transforming in uncertainty.



The report provides a retrospective view of a year of success through digital transformation, a strong focus on our people and adapting to support the conveyancing process through the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis.

The year April 2019 through March 2020 saw HM Land Registry:

- empower more than 5,000 of our people to work remotely to ensure continuity in conveyancing through the coronavirus crisis
- deliver on some 35.6 million service requests, maintaining a 90% customer satisfaction rate
- expand our digital transformation with new online services to grow and support the 94.8% of all applications we now receive electronically

The full report provides commentary on a year of exciting change underpinning property rights worth more than £7 trillion, and more than £1 trillion in secured lending, tied to more than 25 million registered parcels of land in England and Wales. It details a staunch focus on the development of digital capability, which has created more facilities to electronically process and support applications in a faster, more accessible manner for years to come; while a combination of increased recruitment, new services and the early stages of enabling team potential through restructuring saw impactful development of our operational ability.

Simon Hayes, Chief Executive and Chief Land Registrar, comments:

Six months after joining HM Land Registry, I am proud to be able to

report on a year of high quality service delivery. Despite the unprecedented challenges which we currently face, I remain confident for the future, and excited by the opportunities that lie ahead. This year has seen HM Land Registry and its people display all the qualities which are needed to deliver its critical role successfully, and which will enable us to set new standards in the coming years.

[Read more about our Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20: Transforming in uncertainty.](#)

The report itself contains financial and performance statements, alongside updates from HM Land Registry's directorship on the year's important developments. [Read the full version.](#)

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## [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.](#)

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## **GLD signs General Counsel for Diversity and Inclusion Statement**

News story

GLD has signed the General Counsel for Diversity and Inclusion's statement to support D&I in the legal sector.



GLD Director General Stephen Braviner Roman

GLD has joined over 100 companies from across the UK, Europe and other jurisdictions in signing the General Counsel for Diversity and Inclusion's (GCDI) statement to support diversity and inclusion not only in GLD but across the legal sector.

GLD is the first government department to sign the statement which has the primary goal to promote greater diversity and inclusion in the legal profession, and encourages all signatories to share best practice on how to achieve a broader, richer environment and identify systemic issues that hinder progress.

As a department GLD is working to keep D&I at the forefront of all we do and in our role in the Civil Service and legal community. The statement represents everything we stand for at GLD and is aligned with our Inclusion for All D&I Strategy 2019-2022.

Our strategy, and desire to lead on promoting D&I in the legal sector, is at

the heart of making GLD a brilliant place to work, creating a safe, supportive and inclusive environment where everyone's talent and contribution is recognised and where we all have a meaningful voice on matters that affect us.

In his video message, GLD Director General and Diversity and Inclusion Champion, Stephen Braviner Roman discusses what this means for GLD.

[Stephen Braviner Roman – GLD signs General Counsel D&I statement](#)

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## [Consumer Satisfaction Survey 2019-20](#)

The OISC launched its Consumer Satisfaction Survey in 2019-20, the purpose of which was to offer advice seeking clients the opportunity to share their experience of the service provided by regulated immigration advisers as well as an analysis of the role of the OISC in the process of consumers receiving immigration advice and services.

The survey contained 25 questions to assess the adviser/client relationship from beginning to end and covered a wide range of issues from how customers selected their chosen adviser, how fees were agreed for the work completed to the quality of client care letters and professionalism of the advice giver.

We are delighted to report that the results of the Consumer Survey presented an overwhelmingly positive response regarding the relationship between regulated advisers and their clients.

Some highlights from the responses received are found below:

- 76% found their advisers through either a recommendation of a friend or other legal professional or had used the adviser before;
- Recommendation, Reputation and Having used them before were the leading reasons as to why clients chose their immigration adviser;
- 95% of respondents stated that they agreed the work that would be done with their adviser before it was carried out during their consultation;
- 100% agreed the price for the advice during the consultation.

Over 90% of clients responded positively when asked whether they were

informed:

- How long their case would take
- Who was responsible for their case
- The possible outcomes of their case
- The level of service they would provide
- The key stages of the matter in hand

Over 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed when asked whether their client care letter was:

- Clear and understandable
- Contained all relevant information
- Clarified costs for the advice
- Contained information on how to complain

Over 95% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed when asked whether their adviser was polite and professional, their communication was effective regarding the immigration case, was knowledgeable and trustworthy and acted ethically towards the client

Over 95% of all clients agreed and strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the service provided and its cost, would recommend their adviser, and obtained the outcome desired from their immigration matter.

100% of respondents' main method of contact with their adviser was either face to face (47%) or via internet/email/social media (53%)

100% of respondents were satisfied with the adviser's complaints process

Regarding the awareness of how the OISC fits into the broader picture between advisers and clients, we were particularly interested to note that the survey highlighted a lack of awareness from the immigration advice seeker of the existence of the OISC and its functions when they first interacted with their advisers, with some 70% admitting they had not heard of the OISC before approaching their representative. Furthermore, only 30% of respondents who used it found the OISC Adviser Finder function of some use in selecting their appointee. However, 90% of responders did not make use of the option.

This information has given the OISC much in terms of food for thought and the organisation has taken steps following the appointment of the new Commissioner to proactively address this issue and is working hard to raise awareness of the OISC and its functions to a much greater audience than ever before.

We would like to thank the advisers who directed their clients to the survey as it has provided valuable feedback to how clients' experience is measured when dealing with OISC regulated professionals.