

# New £26 million fund to help local authorities speed up data transfers

News story

HM Treasury is providing additional financial support for councils migrating their local land charges service to HM Land Registry.



The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP, has announced the creation of a £26 million fund to help deliver a faster property search service for homebuyers in England and Wales through a national Local Land Charges Register.

Last December, we shared our ambition to migrate all local authorities in England and Wales onto the central register by 2025. This funding makes that target more achievable and will ensure the homebuying process becomes quicker and simpler for everyone.

Local authorities who transfer their local land charges data to our Local Land Charges (LLC) Register within an agreed timescale will receive transition payments. In addition they will continue to receive existing [burdens payments](#). This means the overall financial support available to local authorities is now more than £40 million.

Karina Singh, HM Land Registry Director of Transformation, said:

We understand the uncertain economic landscape facing many local authorities and the resourcing issues this creates. In the UK, property remains one of the single largest investments many people make. We want to help buyers get the information they need, in a faster and simpler manner.

Research suggests that 6% of property transactions fail, costing between £700 and £2,700 per transaction. By enabling earlier access to LLC information these costs should reduce, making the

conveyancing process better for all parties.

All local authorities who migrate their LLC service to the central register will qualify for a payment when they meet their scheduled milestones. This will give them greater financial certainty that they can meet incidental costs, when seamlessly moving their service to the LLC Register.

For more information visit our [Local Land Charges Programme](#) page.

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## [Extension to Chair of the Lay Observers' National Council term](#)

News story

The Secretary of State has announced a 1 year extension to John Thornhill OBE's tenure as Chair of the Lay Observers' National Council.



The Secretary of State has announced an extension to John Thornhill's tenure as Chair of the Lay Observers' National Council from 1 June 2021 until 31 May 2022.

This appointment is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and the extension has been made in line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Lay Observers are unpaid public appointees appointed by the Secretary of State under the 1991 Criminal Justice Act. They inspect the conditions in which Detained Persons are transported or held by escort or custody contractors in England and Wales.

The Chair convenes and oversees the work of the National Council, leading its

development and ensuring that monitoring is appropriately performed by the Lay Observers and that their work dovetails with that of other bodies.

## **Biography**

John Thornhill was appointed as Chair of the Lay Observers' National Council in June 2018 following an open competition.

He was President of the Independent Monitoring Boards (IMBs) until 2017. He was awarded an OBE in 2016 for services to the Criminal Justice System and in 2013 awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree (LLD) by Manchester Metropolitan University in recognition of his distinguished achievements in the fields of law, education and public service.

He has declared no political activity.

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## **Environment Agency delivers £1.3 million boost to England's fisheries**

The Environment Agency's Fisheries Improvement Programme (FIP) has invested £1.3 million in projects across England to benefit anglers, deliver improvements to vital habitats, increase fish stocks and improve accessibility to ensure the sport is as inclusive as possible.

Every penny the Environment Agency receives in fishing licence income is reinvested to protect both the sport of angling and England's waterways. In the last 12 months alone, alongside partners, the FIP has delivered more than 170 completed projects across England.

The FIP funding is matched by local partners including angling clubs and fisheries. The EA has also worked closely with local rivers trusts and the Wild Trout Trust. The total match funding, made up of additional cash and in-kind contributions, is estimated to be more than £3.2 million which continues to have a positive impact on local communities, angling and ecology.

In Devon and Cornwall, £64,000 was used to support nine projects ranging from habitat improvement for wild native trout, enabling access to fishing for people with disabilities and working with small coarse fisheries to improve the facilities for their members.

In Essex, a new fishery has been developed for military veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Here, the Environment Agency is working in partnership with [iCarp](#) to establish and revamp Lifted Lakes near Harwich.

The venue is intended to be used as a base for treatment and future mental health research. A £10,000 FIP grant was used to enhance the environment for fish and refurbish angling platforms and facilities.

**Heidi Stone, Environment Agency Fisheries Manager said:**

All of the projects we fund must demonstrate benefits for anglers. The Fisheries Improvement Programme allows us to identify and invest in work supporting a local, sustainable future for angling.

The programme is also a great demonstration of our partnership efforts, with many of the projects completed with the support of landowners, local businesses and fisheries clubs – it's a real team effort! The more people who go fishing, the more we can invest.

In the last 12 months alone, alongside partners, the FIP has delivered more than 170 completed projects across England. The programme covers rivers and stillwaters and will benefit coarse fish, trout and eels.

Looking forward, the Environment Agency wants to hear from more clubs and fisheries about the work and projects they would like to see undertaken.

**Further examples of FIP projects completed in 2020/21 include:**

**Ranby House on the Humber**

A £1,600 investment has improved local fishing facilities for schoolchildren at Ranby House. In 2019, the fishing pond was nothing more than a small overgrown flooded area which was unsuitable for the school children to explore safely, let alone fish. The pond has now been partially de-silted and deepened, with overgrowth removed and managed. Dipping and angling platforms have also been installed and the pond has been stocked with fish from the Agency's Calverton Fish Farm.

Thanks to the FIP, the pupils will now be able to learn to fish as part of their curriculum and develop a meaningful connection with nature. They will also learn how to recognise the various aquatic life living in the water.

**River Great Ouse, Cambridgeshire**

£15,000 was used on a backwater enhancement project on the river Great Ouse at Eaton Ford on the lower section. In partnership with St Neots Angling society, Huntingdonshire district council and St Neots Town Council, the work involved removing silt which increased the depth of the channel, clearing plants which were making it impossible for anglers to fish, the installation of several fishing platforms and the removal of fallen branches from trees to improve accessibility for fishing. The silt removed was also used to re-profile the bank, making it stronger, and it was also re-seeded with wild flower mix to benefit pollinators.

A further £8,000 was used to deliver improvements on the Ouse as part of a

project in partnership with Luton Angling Club. The stretch of the Ouse had previously been difficult for members of Luton Angling Club with mobility impairments to access. Work was carried out to enhance habitat on the river by removing over-grown willow which grows rapidly and causes accessibility issues for anglers. Silt was also removed from the backwater to deepen the area for fish and to provide better fishing conditions and safer access.

### **Walton Hall Park Lake, Liverpool**

Using FIP funding, a project was undertaken on an urban fishery to improve historically poor water quality. To preserve and enhance this angling resource and to return the lake to its former glory, habitat improvements were made. These included floating islands, duck platforms and fish refuges to provide shade and refuge for fish from predators and help to regulate water temperatures. Vegetation bays were also used to provide cover, food for fish and fry and contribute positively to water quality. Equipment was provided for volunteers to complete tasks and help with ongoing fishery management and aeration equipment to help in times of crisis.

### **Club Brunel, Cornwall**

Club Brunel are a small course fishery in South East Cornwall, supporting around 100 members. Over the years, they have worked with the Environment Agency to improve the habitat around the lake for fish and wildlife and also the facilities for their members.

Around £3,000 was allocated this year to stabilise the banks of the lake and add marginal habitat for juvenile fish to shelter in. This was done by adding coir rolls, pre-planted with marginal vegetation. An area was set aside in the shallows for carp to breed to help improve stocks and resilience of the species. The club could not afford this expenditure alone from membership subscriptions, so by working in partnership with the Agency and utilising FIP funding, they are able to make substantial improvements to this small fishery.

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## **Extension to National Chair of the Independent Monitoring Boards term**

News story

The Secretary of State has announced a one year extension to Dame Anne Owers DBE's tenure as National Chair of the Independent Monitoring Boards.



The Secretary of State has announced an extension to Dame Anne Owers' tenure as National Chair of the Independent Monitoring Boards from 1 June 2021 until 31 May 2022.

This appointment is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and the extension has been made in line with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Independent Monitoring Boards (IMBs) provide statutory, independent oversight, monitoring the treatment and care of prisoners and detainees. They operate in prisons, young offender institutions, immigration removal centres, some short-term holding facilities and on flights for those being removed from the UK.

## **Biography**

Dame Anne Owers was appointed as the first National Chair of the Independent Monitoring Boards (IMBs) in November 2017 following an open competition.

Dame Anne was the Chair of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (now the Independent Office for Police Conduct) from 2012 to 2017. She was Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons between 2001 and 2010 and chaired a review of prisons in Northern Ireland from 2010 to 2011.

Prior to that she was the Director of Justice, the UK human rights and law reform organisation (1992-2001) and General Secretary of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (1986-1992).

She currently chairs Koestler Arts, the prison arts charity. She was also a member of the advisory group to the Lammy review of race and criminal justice.

Dame Anne has declared no political activity.

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# [New measures to help vulnerable people in problem debt](#)



## **Update 29 June 2021**

New monetary eligibility limits for those eligible for Debt Relief Orders come into effect from today – helping more people get a fresh start. [Find more information here.](#)

### **Legislation can be found here:**

More people will be able to access the debt solution, giving them a fresh start, as a result of the changes announced today, which will come into force at the end of June.

The changes to DRO eligibility criteria will see the level of debt at which people can apply for a DRO increase from £20,000 to £30,000. It is expected that over 13,000 more people may use DROs in the next 12 months compared to 2019, an increase of nearly 50 per cent.

Minister for Corporate Responsibility Lord Callanan said:

Debt Relief Orders help those with problem debt get to grips with their finances, these changes will enable more people experiencing problem debt to get a fresh start.

The changes to the criteria will:

- Increase the threshold on the value of assets that a debtor can hold and be eligible to enter into a DRO from £1,000 to £2,000.
- Increase the value of a single motor vehicle that can be disregarded from the total value of assets from £1,000 to £2,000.
- Increase the level of surplus income received by the debtor before payments should be made to creditors from £50 to £75 per month.
- Increase the total debt allowable for a DRO from £20,000 to £30,000.

The new criteria will [follow a consultation](#) earlier in the year. The changes are due to come into effect on 29 June to coincide with the end of the first 60 days of [the Government's Breathing Space scheme](#), which began on 4 May 2021.

Debt Relief Orders were introduced in 2009 and are aimed at individuals with relatively low levels of unmanageable debt who have nothing to offer their creditors, such as assets or disposable income, and for whom bankruptcy would be a disproportionate response. A DRO sees debt repayments and interest frozen, while creditors are unable to pursue debtors for a 12-month period, after which the debts are written off.

## Notes to editors

- DROs apply to England and Wales only (personal insolvency is devolved to Scotland and Northern Ireland.)

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Last updated 29 June 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

### 1. 29 June 2021

An edit was made on 29 June to advise new monetary eligibility criteria for Debt Relief Orders was now in place.

### 2. 10 May 2021

First published.