



International Unit - End of Year Report

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Report on the work of Land Registry's International Unit

April 2003 – March 2004

Foreword

It is my pleasure to present to you the first end of year report on the activities of Land Registry's International Unit.

It has been an exciting year in which we have had dealings with over 30 countries and made contact with over 200 organisations and individuals active in the sphere of land administration.

Reflecting on the experiences of the last twelve months it is apparent that the effective administration of land as the source of wealth and natural resources is now a global issue.

A key strategy for those countries that are endeavouring to address this issue is the establishment of an efficient and sustainable system of land registration, which can play a major part in assisting with the creation of wealth and the establishment of a modern economy, by formalizing ownership rights and providing the security whereby individuals and businesses have the confidence to deal with land and property.

With over 140 years of land registration experience behind us it is my firm belief that the Land Registry has much to offer those countries that are actively seeking to do this.

We have already gained some experience in this field, most recently through our work in Romania, Bahrain and Bermuda. I believe that the important next step will be to determine how we can build on this experience in order to formulate our future operating strategy.

I am confident that the coming year will prove to be as exciting and offer as many challenges as the last. It should provide us with further opportunities to become "more outward looking and entrepreneurial" and to "re-deploy staff and their talents into different and perhaps even more challenging and interesting areas".

John Meadows
Head of International Unit
March 2004

(* Facing the Future: Land Registry's Vision and Values – a summary of Land Registry's 10-Year Strategic Plan.)



Background.

The Quinquennial Review (QQR) of HM Land Registry stated that "...the Land Registry could do much to help.... Governments in certain other countries, by developing a range of advisory services in areas where Registry staff have special expertise and experience not readily available elsewhere."

The report went on to recommend the setting up of a Land Registry Advisory Service (LRAS) and in particular an International Unit that would provide "... expert advice and consultancy services to the Governments and Registries of other countries, mostly, if not entirely within the framework of international development assistance programmes."

I can report that in response to those recommendations the process of establishing an international unit has now been completed. The Unit currently comprises myself as Head of Division and Mr. John Richardson as Project and Administrative Support Officer. In addition Mr John Manthorpe is contracted to Land Registry as an Advisor on International Land Administration matters. The Director responsible is Ted Beardsall.

This Report provides an overview of our key achievements during our first twelve months of operations.

Purpose of the Unit and Objectives

Objective 7 of the revised ten-year Strategic Plan covers the work of the International Unit:

Strategic Objective 7

'To identify the scope for providing further public services relating to our own sphere of business activity, utilising our skills, data and resources.'

The work of the Unit places it in a unique position to assess how effectively the Land Registry is fulfilling its mission to provide "***the world's best service for guaranteeing ownership of land and facilitating property transactions***".

In support of this, the stated purpose of the Unit is as follows:

"To provide land registration advice, expertise and technical know-how to those countries seeking to establish and develop private land ownership, secure land tenure and functioning land and mortgage markets.

To learn from developments and initiatives from the international scene to help ensure that Land Registry remains one of the world leaders in the maintenance and delivery of effective land registration services."



To achieve of this purpose a number of specific objectives were set for the first year of operation.

Using these objectives as headings, this report describes the significant activities of the last twelve months.

Objective A

Establish and maintain an Administrative Centre to act as a focal point for all overseas enquiries and as an organisational centre for all incoming and outgoing international activities.

The Unit was established on the 1 April 2003 with a designated Cost Centre and delegated budgetary responsibilities. Since then the Unit has sought to establish itself as the focal point for all of the Land Registry's overseas activities, details of which are set out in this report.

Objective B

Maintain a Central Knowledge and Information Centre to hold literature, legislation and documentation relating to registries and registration systems from overseas.

Since its inception the Unit has inherited a large number of files and papers relating to overseas land administration systems and land markets. This material has been collected over a number of years; in different divisions as a result of individuals undertaking overseas visits, attending conferences etc.

We have gradually been cataloguing and sorting this material, firstly to establish its continuing relevance and secondly in preparation for it being added to the Head Office Library.

Objective C

Provide consultancy and advisory services independently or in co-operation with others as required.

Throughout the year the Unit has continued to look for opportunities for Land Registry to undertake overseas project work.

The adopted strategy has been to rely upon direct requests for assistance being made by overseas governments. Such requests have come either directly to Land Registry or have been channelled through other government departments (e.g. The Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)).

Adopting such an approach during the Unit's first year of operations has delivered a number of benefits:

Firstly it meant that the demand that has been made on the department's resources to support overseas projects has been kept to a minimum. This has been particularly important over the past year while the department has concentrated on achieving a successful introduction of the new Land Registration Act.



Secondly it has allowed the Unit to gain a good understanding of the machinery of government as a result of its dealings with the DCA and the FCO.

A point worthy of note is that whenever the opportunity to undertake overseas project work has arisen then the Unit has made regular Ministerial Submissions in order to ensure the support of the Secretary of State and Lord Chancellor and our Minister.

Romania

Land Registry's Programme of Assistance to the Romanian Ministry of Justice was concluded in October 2003. The Programme, which was jointly funded by Land Registry and the FCO and supported by Hewlett Packard, our IT Infrastructure partners who donated IT equipment, was very well received by the Romanian Land Book Offices in which we were active. In addition to the benefits that the Programme provided to our Romanian colleagues it also provided an excellent development opportunity for the Land Registry staff that were involved and provided the International Unit with some useful lessons about the nature and challenges of overseas work.

Nigeria

In March of 2003 the Unit was approached by the FCO, on behalf of the Government of Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory, with a view to assisting with the modernisation of the territories land registration system. Following several months of negotiation between the interested parties and a number of ministerial submissions a lack of available funding appears to have curtailed any further involvement.

Bahrain

Following a visit to Bahrain, by the Deputy Chief Executive and Head of the International Unit in June 2003, Land Registry has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with that country's Survey and Land Registration Bureau aimed at assisting with the modernisation of its land registration practices and procedures. The first phase of a Programme of Assistance was completed in January and the Unit is currently involved in negotiating the next phase. The Government of Bahrain has met costs associated with this work.

Bermuda

In August 2003 the Unit was approached by the Government of Bermuda, who were seeking assistance with the island's efforts to introduce a title registration system. In November 2003, at the invitation of the Bermudan Government the International Unit undertook a fact finding visit to Bermuda that resulted in the production of a report outlining options for taking the project forward and offering further assistance from Land registry. At the time of writing we are awaiting a formal response.



Other Project Work

Following the signing of the Business Development Agreement with Registers (RoS) of Scotland (see below) the Unit offered Land Registry's support on two bids made by RoS for work in Poland and Romania. This involved the Unit in the production of supporting material and the identification of Land Registry staff, (one person per bid), with the necessary skills and experience. Neither bid was successful.

On a more positive note the Unit offered practical support to another project being undertaken by RoS, this time in Ireland. On this occasion Survey and Mapping Services were engaged to produce a case study on Land Registry's Vectorisation Project. The project in Ireland was supported by the European Union and thus we were able to cover full costs associated with this work.

Objective D

Build and maintain working relationships and participation with International, European and UK Institutions and donor bodies active in the sphere of land registration.

Business Development Agreement with Registers of Scotland

In the interest of promoting joined up government, ensuring that we aren't in competition (which could be viewed as a waste of public money) and to continue to foster the good working relationship that exists between our organisations the Unit has entered into a Business Development Agreement with the Registers of Scotland International Consultancy Group.

The Unit is indebted to our colleagues in Scotland for the support and advice they have provided over the past year.

Establishing Contacts

During the first month of the Unit's existence time and effort was spent establishing contacts with International, European and UK Institutions and donor bodies active in the sphere of land registration.

As a result of these efforts a letter of introduction was sent out to over 300 individuals and organisations informing them of the establishment of the Unit.

Conference Attendance

In the course of the last twelve months the Unit has been presented with numerous opportunities to send personnel to international conferences dealing with the many aspects of Land Administration.

While such conferences invariably present opportunities to build and maintain working relationships the Unit has taken the view that sending personnel to each and every conference would be seen to be unjustified and wasteful. We have therefore tried to identify those events where Land Registry can add value, or gain from participation, based upon our organisational experience.



Set out below are details of the international conferences in which Land Registry took part.

May 2003

A symposium sponsored by FIG (The International Federation of Surveyors) on 'IT Renewal Strategy' at the ITC, Enschede, Holland

June 2003

A Conference organised by the Centro Internacional de Derecho Registral (CINDER) focusing on the 'Development of Land Registration Legislation' held in Moscow, Russian Federation.

September 2003

A conference on 'Customer Oriented Cadastre' organised by FIG and the Association of Polish Surveyors and held in Krakow, Poland.

In addition to the above Land Registry has continued to be represented at meetings of the UNECE Working Party on Land Administration (UNECE WPLA) and at the Australian Registrars and Development Officers conferences.

Work on behalf of the UNECE

The Land Registry has long been represented on the Bureau of the UNECE working party on Land Administration (WPLA), firstly by our Advisor (John Manthorpe) and for the last four years by the Director for Business Development, Ted Beardsall. As a result of this representation the Unit has been engaged in undertaking two significant pieces of work on behalf of the WPLA.

Guidelines on the use of Public Private Partnerships:

As well as undertaking a questionnaire on the use of PPP amongst land administration organisations in UNECE member states the Unit has also provided a definition of PPP together with an introduction and glossary to the guidelines.

The 4th Edition of the Inventory of Land Administration Systems in Europe and North America:

Under the guidance of John Manthorpe the Unit has recently started work on the production of the fourth edition of the Inventory. Letters have been sent out to all UNECE member states asking for updated information. It is anticipated that work on this publication will continue throughout 2004.

Central European Land Knowledge Centre (CELK)

The Head of the Unit has represented Land Registry as a member of the Advisory Committee of CELK. The Centre has been established within the Property Rights and Land Market Development Project for EU Candidate and Balkan Countries by the financial assistance of the World Bank and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD), Republic of Hungary.



Enquiries

The Unit has handled a considerable number of overseas enquiries from a range of sources as well as completing questionnaires for organisations that include the World Bank and the UNECE.

Objective E

Build and maintain contact with Land Registries overseas, identifying contacts and building relationships.

Incoming Study Visits

Since its inception the Unit has taken on full responsibility for organising incoming study visits. The visits not only provide an opportunity for Land Registry to share its experience and expertise but also facilitate the building of relationships with our colleagues working in counterpart organisations overseas.

In total the Unit has hosted 14 study visits that have ranged from a half-day to a week in length.

Where a general overview of Land Registry operations has been all that the visitors have required then the Unit has taken sole responsibility. Invariably, however, we have had to call on the expertise of our colleagues in other divisions and at Land Registry offices to explain our financial structure or show our work practices. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the staff that have supported our work in this area.

Set out below is a brief description of the visits that have taken place over the last twelve months.

Mongolia

Following a request by the Mongolian Embassy in London a delegation from the Mongolian Administration for Land Affairs Geodesy and Cartography, led by the Head of the Mongolian Immovable Property Registration Agency, undertook a four-day study visit to Head Office and Tunbridge Wells.

Romania

In May 2003, as part of our Programme of Assistance to the Romanian Ministry of Justice, senior officials from the ministry's Land Book Directorate in Bucharest together with staff from the Targu Mures Land Book Office visited Head Office and Telford.

Slovakia

In June 2003 the Unit hosted a two-day visit by officials from the Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre Authority of the Slovak Republic. The visit focused on Land Registry's use of IT, its scanning programmes and self-financing.



Croatia

In July a delegation from the State Geodetic Administration of Croatia made a one day study visit to Head Office as part of a wider European Study Tour that was sponsored by the Norwegian-Croatian Geo-Information Project. The UK element of the study tour was a co-ordinated effort between Land Registry and Registers of Scotland and focused on the development of our mapping systems.

Israel

Also in July the Unit hosted a one-day study visit by senior officials from the Israeli Government. The visit, sponsored by the British Council, focused on the process by which Land Registry became an Executive Agency and Trading Fund.

Ukraine

Another study visit that involved co-ordination with our Scottish colleagues. At the end of August the Unit hosted a World Bank sponsored two-day study visit by a delegation of officials representing the various bodies involved in introducing title registration in the Ukraine. The second day of the visit was spent at our Croydon Office where the visitors were provided with a demonstration of our casework processing systems.

Estonia

In September members of the Estonian Government's Financial Regulation Unit made a one-day visit to Head Office to discuss our approach to budgeting and corporate planning.

Peru

Also in September two members of the Instituto Libertad y Democracia, the organisation founded by Hernando de Soto and based in Lima, Peru made a two day visit to Head Office and Croydon. Areas of interest included how Land Registry deals with adverse possession and the requirements of Land Registry for registering companies as landowners.

Antigua and Barbuda

In October the Head of the Unit accompanied the acting Registrar of Lands for Antigua and Barbuda on a one-day tour of the Land Registry's Nottingham West office.

Nigeria

Mr. David Garnvwa of the Nigerian Urban Planning Authority made a one-day visit to Headquarters in November and was provided with an overview of the part that Land Registry plays in the process of buying and selling of land.

China

A delegation from the Chinese Ministry of Land and Resources undertook a half day visit to Head Office where they were provided with presentations outlining Land Registry's administrative structure, its relationship with other departments involved in land administration and the general features of the land registration system in England and Wales.



Jersey

In November Sir Philip Bailhache, the Bailiff of Jersey visited the Land Registry Office Croydon. He was provided with an overview of the offices operations and with a demonstration of our casework processing systems.

Malaysia

In December members of the Malaysian Administrative and Management Planning Unit, (MAMPU), accompanied by two consultants from IBM visited Head Office. In addition to learning about the organisational structure of Land Registry and the development of e-business systems the visitors were also provided with an overview of Land Registry's IS strategy by the Director of Information Systems.

Trinidad and Tobago

In January Mr. Malcolm Robertson the former Surveyor General for Trinidad and Tobago paid a half day visit to Head Office to discuss Land Registry's approach to registering boundaries.

Outgoing Study Visits

The Unit has completed two short study visits at the invitation of overseas jurisdictions. Both visits have proven extremely beneficial in providing the Unit with a working knowledge of European Cadastral systems.

Austria and Slovakia

In April 2003 the Head of the Unit made a short visit to BEV (Bundesamt für Eich-und Vermessungswesen) the Austrian Mapping authority, the Austrian Ministry of Justice, the Centre for Legal Competence, Vienna and the Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre Authority of the Slovak Republic in Bratislava. The visit provided an excellent opportunity to undertake a comparative study of the process of selling and buying property in the two countries and made for an interesting introduction to the nuances of cadastral systems.

Netherlands

In March 2004 members of the International Unit accompanied by members of Land Registry's e-conveyancing team made a two day study visit to the Dutch Kadaster. The visit focused on two key areas; the set up and operations of Kadaster International and the Kadaster's development and use of electronic services.

Objective F

Establish the best methods for incoming visitors to learn about the work of the Land Registry in a way that is best suited to their needs, including the design and development of appropriate training packages in support of this.

The organisation and co-ordination of study visits has formed an integral part of the Units work during the first twelve months of operation.

To assist with the delivery of study visits the Unit has called upon the assistance of colleagues at both Head Office and Land Registry Offices.



Excelerate Team Project

Where possible the Unit has tried to provide bespoke study tours based on the requirements of individual groups. It has become evident however that there is a certain amount of generic information that is provided to all overseas visitors and that guests often leave carrying a considerable amount of documentation and paper.

To address this the Unit has instigated a project with staff from the Land Registry Wales Office who are participating in a local development programme to produce a CD-ROM for visitors. This will contain copies of all of the Unit's presentational material, information on the structure of the Land Registry and the system of land registration in England and Wales, electronic versions of our practice and advise leaflets and links to relevant pages on the corporate web site.

Objective G

Raise progressively the profile of the unit and its role and develop and maintain promotional material explaining the international role of the Registry and available services

In addition to the letter of introduction referred to under Objective D the following steps have been taken to raise the profile of the unit.

Web pages have been added to the Corporate Intranet.

A letter has been sent to all Land Registry offices providing an overview of the work of the unit and inviting staff interested in overseas work to register their names with the Unit and complete a CV (See Objective H below). An International Unit Open Day has been held for selected staff that have registered an interest in overseas work.

It is acknowledged that there is still much to achieve in order to fulfil this objective. The next step will depend upon how the activities of the Unit are developed over the coming year. If a more proactive approach is taken towards the acquisition of project work then it is likely that a range of corporate promotional material (including corporate internet pages) will be appropriate outlining the services and assistance Land Registry is capable of providing.

Objective H

Establish and maintain a register of qualified Land Registry staff available to provide assistance overseas.

Prior to the establishment of the Unit, a register of staff interested in international work already existed. Utilizing this information a letter was sent to all Land Registry Offices inviting those staff whose names already appeared on the register to re-confirm their interest while at the same time providing other staff with the opportunity to put their names forward.



In addition to registering their interest staff were also requested to complete a CV. This step was taken as a necessary response to the requirements of donor organisations who request that CVs are included with any formal bid for work.

A database has been created to hold all of the information that has been gathered. The database currently holds details and CVs for 80 staff.

Objective I

Provide an annual report on the activities of the Unit.

General Comments

Work of the Advisor

The Unit is greatly indebted to John Manthorpe who, in his capacity as Advisor to the Unit, has offered a considerable amount of advice and guidance during the first year of operation, based upon his wealth of knowledge and experience.

In particular the Unit would like to express its thanks to John for the support and assistance he has offered with regard to making contact with other land administration organisations, study visits, the work being undertaken on behalf of the UNECE and project work undertaken in Bermuda and Bahrain.

Funding / Cost recovery

The stated intention of the Quinquennial Review was that specialist units formed under the banner of Land Registry Advisory Services should be self-financing.

In its first year of operation the unit has sought to cover its costs and where appropriate generate revenue.

Where study visits have been sponsored by third party donor organisations (e.g. World Bank) then all associated costs have been recovered.

Where an overseas government has engaged the services of Land Registry to undertake project feasibility work then all costs have been borne by the sponsor.

Where direct consultancy advice has been provided, as in the case of both Bermuda and Bahrain, then a fee has been charged.

The Unit has also recovered costs when producing documentation for and providing lectures to external organisations.

Staff Security

The security of staff working on overseas assignments remains of paramount importance, as does the security of the department with regard to incoming visitors.



Before sending staff overseas the Unit always ensures that comprehensive travel insurance is provided, obtains the latest security advice from the FCO and also makes direct contact and registers individuals names with the appropriate British Embassy.

In addition to the above and working in cooperation with Business Continuity Group (who in turn consult Central Government Security Services), the Unit has established a process for registering and vetting incoming visitors.

Future Strategy and Development of the Unit

The developments of the last year provide a sound basis for the Unit to develop its international presence.

In order to determine an appropriate future operating strategy it is not only necessary to review the achievements of the past twelve months but also consider how work is likely to arise in the future and look briefly at wider environmental factors that may have an influence on this.

In the coming period the Unit's work is likely to arise from the following sources:

- Requests to organise study visits by individuals and groups from overseas
- Requests and invitations for Land Registry personnel to attend conferences and seminars
- Requests for general information about the system of land registration in England and Wales
- Direct requests from bodies such as the UNECE and the World bank to provide support, advice and technical assistance
- Direct requests from governments to conduct overseas project work
- Requests to nominate staff to participate in bids made by consortia for project work overseas.
- Open tenders for overseas project work.

Observations on the Units Operating Environment

The work of the Unit is to a large extent, demand driven and the environment in which it operates is a competitive one, in that counterpart organisations in Scotland, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Austria and Germany have all established active and successful overseas units with pro-active policies to promote their skills worldwide.

It remains to be seen whether there will be any change in the geographical source of work. In May 2004 a large group of the former communist states of Eastern Europe will join the European Union. These states have already enjoyed considerable support and funding to assist with the development of land registration and cadastral systems. Whether these states see a further



need for technical assistance is not yet clear. Certainly there will be scope for them to develop their systems. At the same time a greater demand for assistance may come from further a field e.g. the former soviet states, Asia and Africa.

Strategy / Objectives for the forthcoming year

The Unit will continue to act as a focal point for all overseas enquiries and as an organisational centre for all incoming and outgoing international activities.

Until such time that the new head office library is established the Unit will continue to act as a central knowledge and information centre, holding literature, legislation and documentation relating to overseas registries and registration systems.

The Unit will continue to build and maintain working relationships and contacts with overseas registries and other organisations active in the sphere of land administration through the organisation and co-ordination of study visits, the attendance at international conferences and symposia and participation in project work.

The Unit will complete its Excelerate Team Project to produce a CD ROM for visitors aimed at providing them with a single source of information about Land Registry.

The Unit will continue to maintain and administer a register of qualified Land Registry staff available to provide assistance overseas.

The Unit will continue to support requests from the UNECE, World Bank, etc. to provide technical assistance and advice overseas.

Work on the compilation of the UNECE's PPP Guidelines and the 4th Edition of the Inventory of Land Administration Systems will continue throughout the year.

The Unit will continue to respond to direct invitations from overseas governments to conduct project work.

To date this has been the main source of overseas project activity with the work that Land Registry has undertaken in Romania and more recently in Bermuda and Bahrain.

Although it is anticipated that the work in Bahrain will continue during the forthcoming year, experience with Nigeria and Bermuda have shown that, even with a direct government approach, the likelihood of subsequent project work cannot be guaranteed.

This type of request is by its nature ad-hoc and therefore if Land Registry is seeking to build upon its existing overseas experience it will need to consider other project opportunities.

The Unit will seek to respond positively to requests to participate in consortia bids for overseas project work



Requests of this nature would appear to offer a genuine opportunity for Land Registry to develop its international experience, while at the same time not having to carry the risks and resourcing implications associated with being a sole bidder.

As an initial strategy the Unit will look to strengthen the ties that it has with the RoS International Consultancy Group, based on the terms of the Business Development Agreement referred to above.

The advantages in adopting this strategy include:

- An opportunity to share RoS well founded and respected International Project experience
- An opportunity to gain an in depth understanding of international tendering/bidding
- Risk Sharing
- Guaranteed generation of income as a result of bidding for donor supported work
- Raising Land Registry's international profile and developing the corporate CV
- Supporting the concept of joined up government

Joining consortia led by other organisations (some in the private sector) could also be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Taking the lead bidding for overseas work

As Land Registry develops its overseas consultancy capacity this option should be seen as a mid to long-term strategy. Based on current experience the Unit is not yet in a position to take the lead in bidding for major project work.

Continue to raise progressively the profile of the unit and its role and develop and maintain promotional material explaining the international role of the Registry and available services

Conclusion and Way Forward

The Unit has had a very successful first year in which its presence on the international scene has been well established. Most of the types of work that it has carried out during the course of its first year can be expected to continue.

The second year will provide an opportunity to take a measured step further in terms of providing advice and consultancy services to overseas governments. It will provide a modest but additional outlet for some of our able staff to express their talents, and enable us to develop a Corporate CV that ultimately should stand comparison with other respected land administration bodies. This step forward would be entirely consistent with Government policy, which would be used to guide any prioritisation of project work. The support of our own DCA Ministers for Land Registry's overseas work has been most encouraging.



Resources to support two or three consultancy projects would involve, perhaps, a dozen people but no more than two or three Full Time Equivalents, the cost of which (plus a return) would be recouped. But international work can be uncertain and often involves 'fits and starts'. To enable decisive action to be taken when needed there needs to be a clear understanding that staff in these modest numbers would be made available (unless there were clearly over-riding reasons for not doing so).

Both the Managing and Directing Boards **ENDORSE** the work of the Unit and the approach that has been adopted. They **ACKNOWLEDGE** its importance for the prestige of the organisation, the development of staff and for the potential revenue for the business.