



Land registry increases efficiency and improves customer service

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landweb Project Manager
Land Registers of Northern Ireland

Under a 12-year strategic partnership with BT, Land Registers of Northern Ireland has transformed its business model

Marketplace

Land Registers of Northern Ireland (LRNI) is the government agency responsible for recording accurate details of legal interest pertaining to land in Northern Ireland. It sits at the heart of all property transactions and aims to provide a fast and accurate service to support the conveyancing process.

With records going back more than 100 years there was no shortage of maps, folios, deeds, and other paper-based documents at LRNI. However, that heavy reliance on paper records meant inefficient processes and duplication of effort. Also, Land Registration fees were perceived as expensive. Furthermore anyone who wanted to view records needed to visit personally the single central LRNI office in Belfast – often involving a costly and time consuming journey.

Business opportunity

Change was on the horizon. Legislation requiring Compulsory First Registration (CFR) for all unregistered land – accounting for around half of all properties in Northern Ireland – would result in a dramatic increase in the number of cases being handled by the Registry. LRNI realised that its existing processes and resources would be unable to support this additional work. It decided that a major transformation of its processes, records and customer service systems was required.

Following an EU approved invitation to tender and selection process, LRNI chose BT as its partner for the transformation project. “We were impressed with BT’s work with the Registers of Scotland,” recalls Wally Gamble, **landweb** Project Manager at LRNI. “Aspects of BT technology, such as the ability to append notes to scanned documents, made its proposal stand out. Finally, BT’s innovative approach to financing the project was extremely attractive to us and made the whole programme possible.”

BT solution

Under the terms of the £45 million, 12-year partnership agreement LRNI did not have to find up front capital to fund the project. Instead BT would provide the finance. Transaction charges would then apply once the system was fully functional. That agreement meant that BT made a significant investment in the project and absorbed the primary risk. And with income derived on a per transaction basis, both parties would have a strong incentive to grow the business in the future.

The project consisted of two parts: **landweb** – the internally facing automation of LRNI business processes; and **landweb direct** – the customer focused service that allows solicitors and others to access data online.

Case study

Land Registers of Northern Ireland

“The **landweb direct facility has enabled solicitors to give clients a more modern and efficient service. This provides a speedier process for all concerned – purchaser, vendor and legal advisor.”**

Patricia Montgomery
Chief Executive
Land Registers of Northern Ireland

The first task for the BT team was to ensure that people at LRNI had a PC on their desk, and that these were networked to provide universal access. BT embarked on a simultaneous programme to convert the LRNI paper archives into electronic form. A bespoke electronic document and records management system (EDRMS) that was capable of handling the unique nature of the LRNI documents was built. The BT team also used its geographical information systems (GIS) expertise to build a platform to support the map-base. A casework management application was incorporated so that each individual case could be handled efficiently and monitored effectively as it passed through the various property purchase and registration stages. Along with a management information system (MIS) and an enterprise resource planning (ERP) application, all these applications were integrated together to provide a seamless end-to-end workflow.

To complete the solution the **landweb direct** portal – through which customers access the system – was built. It incorporated secure transaction payment facilities using the authentication service provided by the Government Gateway. To ensure the security of the new electronic service, BT conducted

a risk analysis and management review in accordance with government policy and set security and access policy. BT also developed a number of disaster recovery and business continuity plans to ensure that valuable LRNI data records would not be lost in the event of a major disaster, power outage or component failure.

Transferring from a paper-based to an electronic system required a significant shift in the way LRNI staff worked. BT change management consultants were engaged in a leadership training programme to ensure that LRNI people were able to take full advantage of the new systems and processes. BT now maintains and supports the system, and deals with any technology related queries, while LRNI has a customer information centre with a help desk facility to handle customer business enquiries.

Results

Northern Ireland, like the rest of the UK, has experienced a property boom in the last decade and, in addition to the CFR initiative, this contributed to an increase in annual transactions from 350,000 in 2000 to 670,000 less than five years later. The **landweb** business transformation equipped LRNI to effectively handle the increase in volume with no increase in staffing levels.

Productivity increases have been underpinned by the **landweb** MIS. This provides much improved business reporting, enabling LRNI to optimise resource deployment. Meanwhile secure online access to folios, maps and other data greatly speeded up the conveyancing process. Processing documents, which used to take perhaps ten days, now takes just five minutes. This has both greatly improved efficiency within LRNI and conveyancers can

also now be sure – through the search and view facilities – that they are requesting the correct documents, which again saves time and money.

By 2005 over half of all solicitor firms in Northern Ireland were actively using **landweb direct**, and the service was handling 71 per cent of total LRNI transactions. Patricia Montgomery, Chief Executive of Land Registers of Northern Ireland, says: “By enabling solicitors to give clients a more modern and efficient service **landweb direct** provides a speedier process for all concerned – purchaser, vendor and legal advisor.”

The Northern Ireland legal community has welcomed the improvements. Legal Secretary, Norma Dunnington, comments: “One key benefit of the service becomes obvious when one is acting for a purchaser. We have the ability to quickly access documents that they don’t have or have misplaced. The way LRNI has filed and referenced information, together with the online speed, allows us to find information while clients wait. This simply wouldn’t have been possible before **landweb direct**: we would have had to delay proceedings by days, sometimes weeks.”

The success has been noted externally. The **landweb** project won the IT Category at the PFI Awards in 2000, where it was deemed by the judging panel to be “outstanding... an exemplar of the transformational effects of PFI”. It was also the runner up for the Association for Graphical Information – Central Government Award in 2002 for use of GIS technology in the government sector. In addition, it was highly commended in the Central eGovernment Excellence: Take-Up Category of the eGovernment National Awards 2005.

Offices worldwide

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Main BT products and services

- Systems integration and implementation services to deliver the **landweb** transformation programme and **landweb direct** customer portal for Land Registers of Northern Ireland
- Change management and business consultancy
- Upgrade of LRNI local area network and refresh of all individual PCs

