

Registers Update - Speed of Service and Quality

UPDATE: 12

Market research over a number of years has highlighted those elements of registration that are of the greatest importance to customers, in particular

- (1) Speed of Service and
- (2) Accuracy of Land Certificates.

This Update provides information on our progress to date and of our plans to realise further improvements in these key aspects of Customer Service.

1. Speed of Service

The following table highlights the average turnaround times in working days for our main registration products over the past 10 years:

Year	Sasines	Dealings	Domestic First Registrations*
1995	34	53	-
1996	33	44	-
1997	48	76	-
1998	37.7	51.5	-
1999	19.5	45.9	-
2000	41.1	46.1	40.5% within 200 days
2001	31.7	37.7	75.5% within 200 days
2002	22.1	27.3	63.8% within 100 days
2003	13.4	16.6	97.8 days, with 75% completed within 125 days
2004	11.6	16.7	103.9 days, with 74% completed within 105 days

* Domestic First Registrations are defined as mainly residential property which does not include commercial or large rural registrations.

Over this period, we have seen substantial increases in the total number of applications for registration, reflecting the high levels of activity in the housing market, re-mortgaging and the inevitable shift from Sasines to the Land Register:

Year	Sasines	Dealings with Whole	First Registrations	Transfers of Part
1995	335,115	58,253	26,132	9,442
2004*	134,000	232,900	77,000	25,600

* Projected figures for 2004

Sasines

It was originally anticipated that the number of deeds to be recorded on the Sasine Register would decline as counties transferred to the Land Register. This has been true to some extent, but re-mortgaging has resulted in intakes remaining relatively high.

We have progressively adopted this methodology across the Sasine Register to the extent that deeds are now recorded and returned within an average of 11.6 working days.

To improve Sasine turnaround times, we introduced the concept of Real Time Working in April 2001 to coincide with the transfer of the county of Midlothian to the Land Register. **(Real Time Working is defined as the quickest and most efficient way to process applications through the various stages of registration without accruing backlogs.)**





Dealings with Whole

Re-mortgaging has also resulted in a substantial increase in the number of applications for Dealings with Whole, particularly over the past few years. This increase has presented us with a major challenge in delivering quicker turnaround times for this product.

Real Time Working for Dealings with Whole has recently been introduced in our Glasgow Office for the counties of Argyll and Bute, Dumfries, Glasgow, Inverness, Nairn, Renfrew, Ross and Cromarty, and Sutherland. This has resulted in the majority of applications being processed within 8 days of receipt. We now know that this methodology works well in practice and intend introducing it to all other Land Register counties in future. However, the impact of this process might not become immediately apparent, as it requires a high investment in training, which must be balanced with the need to maintain turnaround times - currently standing at 16.7 days.

Real Time Working has also made an impact on the turnaround times for First Registrations. Since its initial introduction to the county of Midlothian in April 2001, Real Time Working has delivered low turnaround times for all but the most complex of cases. Currently, 12 of the 33 Land Register counties are operating to this methodology. Whilst we acknowledge that there are still some arrears in those counties not benefiting from this way of working, our first priority is to ensure that the overall situation continues to improve despite increasing levels of First Registration Intake. This will happen, but intake levels have a direct bearing on our capacity to reduce arrears, since higher intakes require more skilled staff. First Registration intake is forecast to peak in 2004-2005 and from that point onward our investment in resources will enable us to realise a more significant improvement in all turnaround times for this product.

Transfers of Part

Transfers of Part have long been an aspect of land registration where arrears have built-up and turnaround times have been adversely affected. Issues such as development on the ground, title extent problems, and lack of detail on the Ordnance Survey Map, have all combined to affect turnaround times for these particular types of applications.

In the past, solicitors, builders and developers have expressed a preference for registration to be completed only upon resolution of title extent problems and the provision of up-to-date Ordnance Survey Map detail. The alternative would have been to exclude indemnity, or plot to the legal title, both of which would lead to problems on the re-sale of the property and the registration of adjoining properties. However, recent developments in new technology regarding the capture and mapping of information on the Ordnance Survey Map, coupled with plans to review our current structures and processes, will help us deliver improvements in turnaround times for Transfers of Part in future.

First Registrations

Since the mid-1990s, we have categorised all applications for First Registration. There are 7 mainstream categories, ranging from a straightforward red-edged plot with burdens that are common to a number of properties, to complex casework made up of commercial and large rural estates. The categorisation of casework enables us to allocate the appropriate level of resource to reflect the complexity of the registration. In the lowest category of work we use new technology to map the Title Plan and populate the Burdens Section automatically. We now turn around this category of casework faster than those requiring a more detailed analysis by a senior registration officer. Consequently, you will receive applications at different intervals depending upon the complexity of the individual application and the work involved in completing the registration process.





Older Complex Casework

We do have arrears of the more complex types of Land Register casework. These cases fall mainly into the category of commercial transactions requiring detailed consideration and correspondence before registration can be completed. We have recently restructured to provide a greater focus within the respective Business Units responsible for this type of casework, ensuring that it is processed as quickly as individual circumstances permit. We have also set a target to complete all pre-January 2000 casework by 1 April 2005.

Land Register Reports

Market research has highlighted a demand for more transactions to be completed electronically. Our Property Reports Service has been one area that has been able to respond to this request. Generally, Land Register Reports are turned around within 24 hours of receipt and the increasing use of e-forms online means that many reports can now be sent to us, processed and returned on the same day.

Chancery and Judicial Registers

We have always provided same-day registration for the Chancery and Judicial Registers. Extracts of deeds are generally processed within 4 - 5 days, Registers of Inhibitions within 6 - 7 days, and Judgements in 1 day. Your satisfaction with this aspect of our performance has been consistently reflected in customer surveys.

Contact Points

If you are concerned about the length of time it is taking to process a particular application in any of the Registers, you should contact the Team Leader responsible via the contact points section of our website:
www.ros.gov.uk/solicitor

2. Quality

In order to address issues regarding the accuracy of Land Certificates, we have recently launched a Right First Time initiative aimed at eliminating the most common types of error from the registration process.

This initiative will build quality into our processes through a three-tiered approach:

(i) Making Changes with Immediate Impact

The following are the most common types of avoidable errors:

- proprietor's name, designation and destination reflecting the deed
- relevant charges in C Section
- Title Plan references clearly visible
- Title Plan references in Title Sheet
- address conforms to standard BS7666
- Land Certificate contains all relevant Sections, in order and correctly bound

Advisory information on these errors has been distributed to all staff. Also, quality performance feedback in relation to these errors has been increased from quarterly to monthly and detailed performance reports are now available to managers within 5 days of the end of each month. Underpinning these activities is a target to achieve 20% reduction in common error types over 3 monthly periods.

(ii) Staff Training and Development.

Revised training plans and supporting manuals are being drawn up as part of our ongoing commitment to staff training and development. Also, Standard Process Instructions have been issued to staff, which our Business Change Team will review and update on a regular basis.



(iii) Customer Involvement

We recognise that we must work closely with customers if we are to realise the benefits from any planned programme of continuous improvement in quality and overall customer service. We also recognise that, as our main supplier and customer, solicitors, in particular, will play a vital role in helping us achieve improvements in speed-of-service and quality. Our strategy for engaging with solicitors will include visits to individual firms from our Head of Customer Relations and a senior registration manager, focus groups on particular aspects of our service, and presentations at local faculty meetings. We will keep you informed of further developments through future Registers Updates and our website www.ros.gov.uk.

