



## The Duchy of Lancaster



Lancaster Castle

The Duchy of Lancaster traces its origins back to 1265, when King Henry III made a grant of land to his son Edmund. Currently valued at around £341 million, the estate is administered on behalf of the sovereign by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Clerk of the Council. Its 18,500 hectares across England and Wales range from the Savoy Estate in London to the Goathland Estate in Yorkshire and include urban developments, historic buildings, farmland and areas of natural beauty. The estate is entirely self-financing.

The registration programme began with the Duchy's coastal property, as Chief Executive Paul Clarke explains. "In addition to extensive agricultural and other estates in England and Wales the Duchy has title to substantial areas of foreshore and also mineral interests between the most northerly and southerly boundaries of the County Palatine of Lancaster," he says.

"For effective management of these interests it is essential to maintain accurate and detailed records which can, as and when necessary, be updated. Legislation requires Land Registry to serve the requisite notice on this office of an application for first registration of land that may include or abut foreshore.

"To comply with such a notice the precise location and extent of the site of such an application has to be identified with both speed and accuracy. Following the introduction of digital mapping and after consultation a specialist and very professional team within Land

Registry's Lancashire Office were assigned, in the first instance, to the Duchy voluntary foreshore registration project.

"The support, expert advice and guidance of this team, who of necessity required unrestricted access to the Duchy records, has proved invaluable. This close working relationship is also proving beneficial to both sides in further projects which are in hand relative to the registration of the Duchy landed estates."

Vyrner Speakman, Register Development Manager at Land Registry's Lancashire Office, started working with the Duchy of Lancaster several years ago. "I had suggested a method of dealing with encroaching registrations on the tidal creeks to the Duchy and they were very keen to explore it," she says. "They were also very receptive to the idea that registration would better protect their interests.

"Several meetings took place in the early stages and a system was established.

"Initially we had problems with the mapping data but the Duchy employed a cartographer and we now have excellent plans to work with. Unlike the foreshore we are encountering very few problems on the landed estates.

"We have become a team that adopts a synergetic approach to problems and meets at fairly frequent intervals."

Registration of the foreshore titles has been completed, along with the Duchy's mineral interests and two of its estates in Lancashire. Work continues on the remaining estates.

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