Title Matters

Land Registry Guidance and Updates for Practitioners in Northern Ireland

Land & Property Services
Seirbhísí Talún agus Maoine

Issue 1

Welcome to Title Matters, a new monthly newsletter from the Land Registers of Northern Ireland. This publication is designed to aid practitioners across Northern Ireland to maintain and update their knowledge on Land Registration issues, to highlight the guidance available from the Land Registry and to respond to frequently asked questions.

Focus on...Practice Directions

The Land Registry of Northern Ireland operates within a legal framework which provides certainty, transparency and confidence in land registration. Practice Directions issued by the Registrar of Titles are designed to provide clear guidance that supports consistency, efficiency and fairness in registration processes by explaining how legal, procedural and operational requirements are applied in practice in a legislative and case law environment which is constantly evolving. Practice Directions help practitioners prepare applications correctly, reduce delays and ensure similar applications are treated consistently, thereby maintaining the integrity and accuracy of the Registers.

In this month's newsletter, we are highlighting Land Registry's most recent Practice Direction and letting you know where to find all previously issued Practice Directions to ensure you remain informed of directions that may affect your work and your clients.

New Practice Direction

Practice Direction 1/2026 - Property which has become Bona Vacantia or Escheat | Department of Finance

This Practice Direction provides guidance on the registration of land which has become vested in the Crown, either as bona vacantia or by escheat. It explains the circumstances in which property becomes ownerless, including where a company is dissolved or, in rare cases, where a person dies intestate, leaving no entitled beneficiaries. Such property passes to the Crown as bona vacantia. It also addresses freehold land which becomes subject to escheat following a disclaimer by the Crown, Official Receiver/Trustee in Bankruptcy or by a liquidator.

The Direction sets out the procedures for dealing with these properties where the Crown agrees to dispose of them. For bona vacantia land, transfers will be provided by the Crown Solicitor's Office and no solicitor's certificate is required. For escheated freehold land, transfers are produced by the Crown Estate's nominated solicitor, and a prescribed solicitor's certificate must accompany the application. The Direction also clarifies the different treatment of leasehold property, noting that leasehold interests cannot escheat and generally require a court order to revive and vest the lease after disclaimer.

The Practice Direction includes the following precedents in the appendices:

Annex 1:
Agreed precedent transfer for the disposal of bona vacantia property by the Crown Solicitor's Office.

Annex 2:
Agreed precedent transfer for the disposal of freehold land subject to escheat by the Crown Estate.

Annex 3:
Precedent solicitor's certificate to accompany applications involving escheated property.

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Previous Practice Directions

All Practice Directions previously published by the Land Registry can be found here

Did you know?

Did you know that the Land Registry operates three mailboxes for Solicitors' queries?

- CustomerInformation.LandRegistration@finance-ni.gov.uk – this mailbox should be used for ongoing or completed applications or when mapping queries arise. Please quote the application/folio number. Note to Practitioners 3/2019 - Mapping queries should be reviewed prior to sending mapping queries.
- Enquiries.LandRegistration@finance-ni.gov.uk – this mailbox should be used for technical difficulties with LandWeb/e-registration. Please quote the application/folio number.
- solicitor.enquiries@finance-ni.gov.uk – this mailbox should be used when assistance is required in unusual transactions and where the appropriate procedure cannot readily be discovered from the legislation, our website or relevant textbooks. It should, however, be noted that Land Registry is not an advisory body and so we cannot provide legal advice nor can we provide prior assurances regarding how future applications will be processed as there are numerous factors which will determine how any application will ultimately be processed.

Using the correct mailbox will ensure the quickest response to your query.

If you wish to receive future issues of Title Matters directly to your inbox, please subscribe here

For information and updates on the new digital services being introduced for Land Registry customers, please visit Improving Land Registers NI | Department of Finance

The information provided in this issue of Title Matters is correct to the best of our knowledge and belief at the time of publication.

The information is for guidance purposes only and Land Registry make no representation or warranty in respect of the information provided. Applications can only be considered and determined once lodged in the Registry. Practitioners should also consider lodging a draft for approval before parties execute, noting that approval relates only to the form and not the content of the document.