Land Registry partners with IBM to transform access to property register

Overview

The Challenge
– To transform delivery of information to the public
– To improve customer service and support e-government objectives

The Solution
– IBM Business Consulting Services – end-to-end consultancy, assistance with project management and web development services
– Joint IBM-Land Registry development of the Land Register Online web site
– IBM Global Services - Integrated Technology Services

The Benefits
– Improved public access to the Land Register with over 3000 transactions per day and delivery times reduced from days to seconds
– Reduced cost of delivering information to the public
– Significant step towards e-enabling Land Registry services in line with the wider e-government agenda
– Transfer of web development knowledge to Land Registry technical staff

Land Registry is a self-funding UK government department that maintains the title register of 20 million properties across England and Wales. Since 1990 the Register has been open to public scrutiny. Members of the public have had to submit enquiries by post, taking up to 5 days, or physically visit one of the 24 Land Registry regional offices to obtain a copy of a property registration and title plan.

Committed to making information more readily available to the general public and a keen supporter of UK eGovernment initiatives, the department set out to develop Land Register Online (**www.landregisteronline.gov.uk**) a service that gives the general public access to the property register via the Internet.

Partner of choice
Land Registry's property database is the largest in the world and staff are experienced in handling all aspects of delivering a high availability, rapid search and selection, back office system. However, they lacked experience in the Internet and in creating a high performance, high availability, public access service.

"It was critical that the service be resilient and capable of responding quickly to large volumes of visitors to the site," says Gordon Vickers, Project Manager at Land Registry. "After a thorough evaluation of vendors, we selected IBM as our partner. IBM has an abundance of experience and knowledge in designing and developing high volume e-government services."

"IBM has demonstrated that it works well alongside Land Registry's staff and that it has the capability and complementary skills to help us successfully transform our processes and improve the way we deliver services to the public."

Ted Beardsall, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Business Development, Land Registry

Identifying the challenges

IBM Business Consulting Services was asked to provide services which included requirements gathering, assessment of current processes and working practices, planning, joint project management and web development services - and to liaise with third party vendors on behalf of Land Registry.

IBM Global Services provided project management expertise to assist with the implementation of a resilient, highly available IT infrastructure, to ensure high levels of system availability.

To create and retain public confidence, the new service had to work perfectly from day one, and the joint project team conducted extensive load testing over a three-week period before going live. IBM deployed a multi-vendor team of specialists to benchmark performance and to conduct load tests many times greater than the transaction volumes expected from the live service.

To further reduce the risk of the site being overloaded, two separate versions were built: one delivering the textual register file and the other including the graphical title plans. This enabled Land Registry to run a low risk pilot service delivering only small downloads, seamlessly switching to full functionality once usage levels and system reliability had been established.

Shared commitment

IBM and Land Registry shared a commitment to making the project a success. "IBM provided a pro-active, joint project manager to share responsibility for the project, attend project board meetings, and keep things on track," says Vickers. "Our joint resolve to get the job done, addressing the inevitable challenges

and managing resources, helped us deliver a successful online public service within tight delivery timescales and on budget."

The integrated IBM – Land Registry team worked closely together across the scope of the project, from concept through development to final roll out.

A successful service

With the help of IBM, Land Registry was able to take a fresh look at its current ways of working, transforming its processes to deliver a high level of customer service.

Land Register Online went live with a very smooth launch and the public can now gain easy access to property information. The site is now attracting over 3000 transactions per day.

The project has provided an excellent platform for Land Registry to move forward with its e-conveyancing programme, which will transform the process of buying and selling property in England and Wales. IBM will partner Land Registry in this new programme.

"Land Registry places huge importance on the reliability and robustness of its infrastructure and systems," says Ted Beardsall, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Business Development at Land Registry. "IBM has demonstrated that it works well alongside Land Registry's staff and that it has the capability and complementary skills to help us successfully transform our processes and improve the way we deliver services to the public."

For more information

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