

Overwhelmingly Rejected But They Press On



Proposals to privatise the Land Registry take centre stage whilst we also examine the latest inshore hydrographic technology, the Internet of Things, BIM and someone thinks 'the times they are a changing'; are we ready?

Two topics are to the fore in this issue: land registration and hydrography. For the latter, we have an excellent article (page 18) on the successor to British Waterways, the Canal & River Trust's new survey vessel equipped with a custom system based around the latest compact multibeam sonar and integrated inertial navigation system. The new vessel and its sensors are improving data quality, reducing 'ping to chart' time and providing both more accurate and clearer results in environments that are often extremely challenging.

We also report (page 17) on Oceanology International, the offshore exhibition and conference. Whilst technology continues to advance, especially in the application of photogrammetry and laser scanning, the industry is facing tough trading conditions following the collapse of crude oil prices. Expect some good hydrographers with outstanding data analysis and modelling skills to be heading back to shore and looking for land surveying opportunities.

An Act of Considerable Folly

The fair and just application of both land registration and the rule of law through a politically independent judiciary have been demonstrated as being essential to a modern economy and a stable democracy. Unsurprisingly around the world, both activities are overseen and regulated by government through state-run institutions and organisations, while leaving significant aspects of day-to-day application to competition between professionals. Behind both disciplines there is a bedrock of accepted practice and case law guaranteed by the state.

In Britain, the Land Registry has been recording the ownership of land and property in England and Wales since 1862. It doesn't cost taxpayers a penny and has returned money to the Treasury in 19 of the last 20 years. A review in 2001 found that 'privatisation should be firmly rejected' and would be 'an act of considerable folly'. A consultation less than two years ago by the Coalition Government to create a service delivery company was rejected by 91% of respondents with 89% stating they 'would not be comfortable with non-civil servants processing land registration information.' Despite this, it is puzzling that the Government has brought forth new proposals for privatisation.

You can read former chief land registrar John Manthorpe's article on why the Land Registry should not be privatised page 26. He has also submitted a formal response to the Government's latest proposals and I quote: "It makes no sense that one private company (NewCo) would be adjudicating, and granting title, on the land rights of other private companies as transactions take place. It makes no sense that a private company (NewCo) would have the power to adjudicate on the property rights of local and central government, other public authorities, lenders, financial and other Institutions and even the Crown... The proposal does not stand up to any reasoned scrutiny."

I am pleased to include Julia Stolle's article comparing land registration practice in Germany with the UK. I hope to bring readers examples of other practice from around the world in the next issue of GW.

... And There's More!

We also have articles on the Internet of Things (now abbreviated to IoT) on page 16; a report on the RICS 2016 BIM conference by Prof Ian Dowman; and Richard Groom has been pondering the future of surveying professionals and finding that there is a lack of professional expertise amongst those who procure survey work around the suitability of those who contract to collect geospatial data. Is Richard's solution the right one? Turn to page 20 to learn more.

We also publish a short article on the state of the satellite navigation constellations which was originally planned for Engineering Surveying Showcase but was held over due to shortage of space. If you would like a copy of Showcase 2016 issue No 1 (the second will be in the autumn) please turn to page 3 for details. Lastly, I look forward to meeting as many readers as possible at GEO Business; full details on page 35.

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