



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

**Baroness Taylor of
Stevenage**

Parliamentary Under-
Secretary of State

**Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government**

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Neil Sachdev

Chair of HM Land Registry Board

www.gov.uk/mhclg

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Dear Neil,

I would like to thank you and Iain Banfield for taking the time to meet the Housing Minister in January. Following a portfolio refresh, I am pleased to have taken on full Ministerial responsibility for HM Land Registry sponsorship. I look forward to working closely with you and Iain going forward.

As chair you are responsible for facilitating the effective operation of the HMLR Board and in supporting and scrutinising the executive team as they work to ensure HMLR is a high performing organisation that delivers for all types of customers. This letter sets out the government's priorities for HMLR over the 2026-27 financial year, both on organisational performance and its role in delivering on government policy priorities.

1. Organisational performance, business planning and KPIs

You should hold HMLR to account as they develop a business plan for 2026-27 that starts to deliver on Strategy 2025+, and in setting challenging KPIs and measures that track performance against this plan.

Professional and citizen customers need to know what they can expect from HMLR and how long it will take for applications to be completed. As I set out in my letter to Iain on 16 January, I remain concerned about the impact the age and volume of outstanding applications is having on customers and the operation of the housing market. In the coming year, therefore, I am looking to you to ensure that HMLR builds on the recent success in this area and makes significant further progress in reducing the age of outstanding applications and reducing the number of outstanding applications. HMLR should implement a business plan that delivers improved, excellent and timely services that are resilient to market fluctuations.

To help customers know what they can expect of HMLR and to facilitate board accountability of HMLR's performance, I would like you to work with the executive team to develop more insightful measures of performance, including service level agreements for each of HMLR's core services. HMLR should work with both its professional and citizen customers to develop clear targets for the service level agreements that facilitate an effective and efficient property market.

HMLR should continue to work towards being customer focused at all levels of the organisation, ensuring the recommendations of the customer care review are implemented and working closely with the Independent Complaints Reviewer.

HMLR should also continue to invest in its long-term digital transformation to modernise both land registration systems and data. Following the 2024 fee increase and a strong spending review settlement, customers rightly have high expectations that they will start to see the benefits of greater investment. HMLR should maximise the use of automation and new technologies such as artificial intelligence to speed up this work, prioritising investment that delivers benefits for customers in the near term and drawing on wider expertise across Government.

Given the vital role of data in this modern world, HMLR should move from positioning itself as a data repository to an organisation that uses its data and expertise to unlock value for customers, the public sector and the wider economy. HMLR should build on the success of the Local Land Charges programme, continuing progress towards completing the programme in 2028 and utilising the expertise that it has developed across the rest of the organisation.

You should support the executive team as they provide strong management in their respective roles, working towards an organisation that is high performing across all grades, offices and teams. In the next year you should help HMLR develop a strategic workforce plan that considers the unique profile of the workforce and the skills needed to deliver Strategy 2025+. The plan should deliver value for money to taxpayers and meet ministerial ambitions on the size and shape of the civil service.

To enable the board to scrutinise HMLR's progress against the delivery of its business plan and hold the executive team to account, you should work closely with the board and executive team to agree public and strategic key performance indicators and targets that are challenging but deliverable. This should include measuring the timeliness and quality of service, the modernisation and digital transformation of land registration systems and data, customer satisfaction, and workforce performance.

2. Government policy priorities

In the Housing Minister's February 2025 letter to you, he set out how HMLR should play its part in government policy priorities, including the delivery of 1.5 million homes in this parliament. This letter builds on those priorities, following work the department and HMLR have undertaken in the past year.

On **1.5m homes**, HMLR should continue to work with my officials to set out HMLR's contribution towards delivering this ambitious target, tracking this work through sponsorship governance forums and reporting to me in the second half of this year. Land ownership information will be vital for delivering **new towns** in the coming decades. I would therefore like HMLR to continue to work with my officials to ensure that the department and Homes England can easily access all the HMLR data and information they need to support high-quality design and accelerated delivery of the next generation of new towns.

On **leasehold and commonhold reform**, HMLR should continue to support the implementation of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 and the design and development of further reforms, particularly the recently published draft Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Bill. HMLR will have a central role to play in delivering a reinvigorated commonhold system, and therefore should continue essential workforce and systems planning to get HMLR commonhold ready.

HMLR should continue to work with my officials to consider options to restructure its **fees and charges model**, ensuring this work is aligned with the government's plans to reduce the cost of living and the cost of home buying and selling.

On **reforms to widen and deepen transparency of land ownership**, I am delighted that the legislation to deliver contractual controls arrangements has been laid in parliament and that good progress has been made on the service design. HMLR should now work to ensure that the data collection system is ready to launch in April 2027. Having also recently given a further steer on options for accelerating completion of the Land Registry, I look forward to seeing a detailed strategy soon.

Thank you for the progress made to date on the work to **open up data on land ownership**, including the new data sharing policy, and the commitment to add INSPIRE IDs and UPRNs to datasets as soon as possible this year. Following further work to identify options for delivering our ambitions to open up data, I would like HMLR to engage with my officials to progress implementation of my priorities at pace.

HMLR should continue supporting the progression of the actions in the **alignment strategy** with the Digital Planning Programme, particularly in ensuring alignment of local authority data requirements. This will reduce duplicative tasks for Local Planning Authorities and speed up data migration and publication.

As detailed in last year's chair's letter, HMLR holds vital **data for supporting policy design, analysis, implementation, service delivery and evaluation**. Using the new data sharing policy and the intention to remove inquiry service fees for the public sector to access HMLR data as a springboard, HMLR should continue to work hard to facilitate better use of its data across government, breaking down barriers and overcoming technical challenges wherever possible. To assist my department I would like HMLR to support the evaluation of the leasehold and commonhold reform programme, the design and delivery of new towns, and further work to understand land and property ownership and control. HMLR should ensure the department can

easily access all the HMLR data and information they need to undertake this work. It is also vital that HMLR has the **appropriate data science, analyst and economist capability and capacity** in place to support this work.

Across all of these priorities, I expect HMLR to work with my officials through appropriate sponsorship governance forums to regularly discuss and monitor workstream outcomes, implementation timelines and sequencing, including where required conversations around prioritisation and resource constraints. HMLR should also ensure that these priorities are explicitly reflected in **business planning activity**, with clear milestones, resource allocation and performance measures that demonstrate how each priority will be delivered and tracked through the 2026–27 plan.

3. Governance

Given the recent departure of Simon Hayes, the impending recruitment of a permanent CEO and Chief Land Registrar, and significant turnover in the executive team I am looking to you as board chair to provide leadership and continuity in a time of transition. I know you will be instrumental in the appointment and induction of the new CEO and Chief Land Registrar. You should also ensure that clear succession plans are in place for the board and executive team. Thank you for your support to Iain in his role as interim CEO.

In leading a board made up of relatively new members you have an important role to play in helping the board members grow and develop, and for the board as a whole to operate as an effective and challenging body.

I also look to you to support the CEO and their executive team in building and developing collaborative strategic sponsorship partnerships with my department that support and promote government priorities.

As chair I expect you to uphold the highest standards of probity in performing your duties. This letter should be read alongside your responsibilities as chair set out in your appointment letter and the MHCLG governance expectations of the chair attached at Annex A.

Thank you once again for your contribution as chair of the Land Registry Board. I welcome the close sponsorship relationship we have established between MHCLG and HMLR. I look forward to receiving quarterly updates on each of the areas set out in this letter and working with you closely in the coming year.

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Annex A: Governance expectations of the Chair

This annex issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), sets out the standard governance expectations of Chairs within its portfolio. This is not an exhaustive list of the duties of a Chair, and should be read alongside the Chair's letter. This annex does not supersede or alter any responsibilities as set out in HMLR's Framework Document or other constitutional documentation.

The Department expects the Chairs of its Arm's Length Bodies to lead the Board in an effective and collegiate manner, and adhere to best practice corporate governance standards where possible in undertaking their roles. It is your responsibility, as Chair of HMLR to lead the Board, and ensure that it undertakes all of its responsibilities as set out in HMLR's governance framework. The Chair should set the tone from the top of HMLR and promote an effective and appropriate culture in both the Boardroom and the wider organisation.

Your responsibilities are to act in accordance with the highest standards of corporate governance, and are complemented by requirements and expectations of you by Government. Below is a list of some of the core governance expectations of MHCLG regarding your duties as Chair encompassing both of these elements. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and does not supplant any responsibilities set out in HMLR's governing documentation:

Set the Board's agenda

You should set HMLR's Board's agenda in good time ahead of a Board meeting. There should be sufficient visibility of items for forthcoming meetings to allow Board members, Executives, and stakeholders as necessary to prepare and engage with the Board. The agenda should focus upon HMLR's strategy and any policies as set by MHCLG. In addition, the Board's agenda should interrogate HMLR's ongoing performance, culture, and value for money, all while being cognisant of its overall accountability to the taxpayer.

Encourage engagement from Board members

You should encourage Board members to engage with HMLR both within Board meetings, through active participation in discussions and decisions, and more widely. You should encourage Board members to join Board committees where they can add value. You should support Board members to contribute their expertise where relevant to HMLR on an ongoing basis. You should foster effective relationships based on trust, mutual respect, and open communication between Board members and the Executive team, both inside and outside of the Boardroom. You should monitor and manage conflicts of interest among Board members in order that the Board may function appropriately, in accordance with the conflicts of interest policies of and HMLR.

Foster relationships between the Board and stakeholders, including government

You should be the principal point of contact between stakeholders and the Board. You should foster constructive relationships with all relevant stakeholders to HMLR. You should also maintain a constructive relationship with MHCLG in the course of your work.

Develop a strong working relationship with the Chief Executive

The relationship with the Chief Executive is key to the long-term success of HMLR. You should provide support and advice to the Chief Executive, while respecting their executive responsibility. You should work with the Chief Executive to consider the strength of the broader executive team. Under your leadership, the Board should consider executive succession planning on a regular basis.

Work with HM Government on the composition of the Board, and the appointment of new Board members

You should consider the composition of the Board in line with the requirements of HMLR on a continual basis, providing regular feedback to MHCLG as appropriate. You should work with

MHCLG to consider appointments to the HMLR Board. You should engage in the appointment process as appropriate as per the agreed framework, and in compliance with rules or regulations governing appointments to the HMLR Board.

Provide mentoring and an induction to new Board members

You should lead the induction to new Board members on behalf of HMLR. You should make sure new Board members are introduced to all relevant people both within HMLR and among stakeholders. This should be done in cooperation with MHCLG. The induction process should familiarise new Board members with HMLR and its overall governance framework.

You should encourage Board members to develop their knowledge and skills

You should continually consider the knowledge and skills that the Board requires to discharge its duties to HMLR. Where the Board would benefit from additional knowledge and skills, which can be met without the need to recruit new or additional Board members, you should encourage Board members to undertake relevant training and education where possible.

Lead the annual evaluation of the Board, which should be externally facilitated at least every three years

You should ensure that a review of the Board's effectiveness is undertaken on an annual basis. This should be facilitated by an external provider at least every three years. Where the evaluation is not externally facilitated, you should lead the process, gathering feedback from Board members regarding the Board's functioning. You should also consider how stakeholders can input into the review, to provide comment upon the Board's effectiveness in engaging with Government and stakeholders. Reviews should produce a written report. You should be responsible for overseeing the implementation of any recommendations arising from a review as necessary.

Evaluate the performance of non-executive Board members at least annually

You should undertake a review, at least annually, of the performance of non-executive Board members. This review should consider their contributions to the Board, and the value they add to HMLR. You should write these reviews and be prepared to share them with MHCLG in an appropriate manner. A written review of performance may be necessary to support any reappointment decisions for Board members.

Be subject to an annual performance evaluation

You should engage with an evaluation of your performance on an annual basis. You should allow the Senior Independent Director to gather feedback on your performance from the perspective of Board members. MHCLG shall gather feedback from Government and other stakeholders. This will be collated by MHCLG and provided to the Principal Accounting Officer in an appropriate manner. A written review of your performance may be necessary to support any reappointment decision.

For additional best practice guidance regarding the role of the Chair, see the "Guidance on board Effectiveness" published by the Financial Reporting Council. This can be found [here](#). For more information on board reviews and member appraisals, please refer to the latest guidance [here](#).