



Land Registration Act 2002 Scope of this guide

This guide is aimed at members of the public considering responding to websites advertising the sale of titles such as “Lord” and “Lady” etc. It explains that Land Registry has no connection with such schemes other than registering any transfer of land involved in the normal course of its statutory duties.

The sale of “titles” and Land Registry

Please tell us if:

- you would like help understanding this guide; or
- you would like this information in a different format, such as audiocassette, or large print.

You can obtain copies of this and all our guides free from any Land Registry Office, and view or download them from our website in English and Welsh.

If you have any questions about this guide, please contact your local Land Registry Office. You can find details of telephone numbers and opening times on our website. Telephone numbers are also listed under ‘Land Registry’ in the telephone directory.

www.landregistry.gov.uk

1 Introduction

There are websites advertising the sale of titles such as “Lord”, “Lady”, “Earl”, etc. These sometimes make reference to HM Land Registry, land registration and Land Registry certificates. Because of these references, we are issuing this guide to try to prevent potential misunderstanding.

2 The type of advertisement involved

The sort of advertisement we have in mind is one which invites John Smith to become “Lord John Smith”, or something similar. There is no suggestion that Mr Smith will actually be knighted or become a peer of the realm. Although the method is not always explained, what seems to be involved is simply a change of name from “John Smith” to “Lord John Smith”, presumably evidenced by deed poll.

It is sometimes part of the scheme that Mr Smith also buys a plot of land and is invited to give it a name, such as “Mayfair”. His ownership of the land is then registered in the register of title maintained by Land Registry - for more general information about the register of title, see Public Guide 1 *A guide to the information we keep and how you*

can obtain it. Prior to 13 October 2003, on completion of registration, we used to issue a land certificate which showed, among other things, the owner and the address of the property, with a name for the property if this has been supplied. From 13 October 2003 with the coming into force of the Land Registration Act 2002, we will issue a Title Information Document instead of a land certificate, but this will again show information taken from the register of title, including details of the owner and the property. So, in the example given, the land certificate or Title Information Document will show that a “Lord John Smith” is owner of “Mayfair”. Mr Smith may then feel he can call himself “Lord John Smith of Mayfair”.

3 Important

The impression might be gained that the land certificate or Title Information Document that we issue is a certification or guarantee by a government department that Mr John Smith is now “officially” Lord John Smith of Mayfair.

Please note that the land certificate or Title Information Document does not in any way certify or guarantee this.

It is important to remember the following points in connection with schemes of this sort:

- In registering the ownership of “Mayfair” (as we have used in our example above) we are doing what we generally do in respect of land that has been sold. Almost all changes of ownership of land have to be registered by Land Registry before the new owner can acquire legal ownership. This is regardless of how large or small the extent of the land is and regardless of whether or not it is in connection with the schemes referred to in this guide.
- The name of the new owner of the land, as shown in the register of title, will simply be taken from the transfer and application form lodged with us. So if John Smith had changed his name to John Brown and this was the name used in the transfer and application form, his name would be given as John Brown in the register.
- Once land is registered, we guarantee the owner's legal ownership or, in technical terms, the owners *title to the land*.

Please note the *title to the land* in this context has nothing whatsoever to do with the *title* in the sense of what a person is called.

In general, by guaranteeing say Mr Smith's legal title to the land, we mean that if another person were able to show that the land belongs instead to him or her, and he or she were then registered as owner in place of Mr Smith, we might have to pay compensation to Mr Smith.

- The ownership of land can be sold or inherited, and so in due course someone else will be registered as owner of “Mayfair”. We will not describe the new owner, say James Smith, as “Lord James Smith” in the register of title merely because the previous owner was described as “Lord John Smith”.

4 Enquiries and comments

If you have a particular concern which is not covered by this guide, please contact Land Registry in advance of the transaction – see the contact details panel on the front cover of this guide. If the transaction is particularly complex, it may be better if you make your enquiry in writing at the Land Registry Office which will process your application.

If you have any comments or suggestions about our guides please send them to:

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32 Lincoln's Inn Fields
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(DX1098 London/
Chancery Lane WC2).

Peter Collis
Chief Land Registrar

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Designed and produced by:
Land Registry, Head Office Corporate Publishing,
32 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3PH.



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