



Mid Devon District Council – Relying on your Delivery Manager, trusting data tools and organising your team for a smooth migration.

LA profile

Local Authority: Mid Devon District Council

Relevant OOAs: Devon County Council and Dartmoor National Park

Work started: December 2022

Served notice: 12 September 2023

Date of migration: 10 October 2023

Interviewee's roles in the local authority:

- Senior LLC Officer
- Assistant LLC Officer
- Corporate Manager for Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement (Senior Responsible Owner)
- Senior GMS Officer
- ICT Team Leader

Data type: Fully digital

Number of charges migrated: 52,256

Software supplier: Idox TLC

Migration supplier: HM Land Registry (HMLR)

Delivery model: HMLR delivered

Live operating mode: Incumbent API

Before the programme

Like many local authorities, the team at Mid Devon District Council had initial concerns about entering HM Land Registry's Local Land Charges Programme. They worried about the scope of the project, the impact it would have on the team, and the likelihood of success.

"I wasn't confident that HMLR understood the size of the problem, the amount of work required around data, and their capacity to deliver the project successfully" said Lisa Lewis, Senior Responsible Officer. "However, as we went through the process and built a relationship with our Delivery Manager, my confidence grew."

Pauline Davey, Senior Local Land Charges officer, worried about the accuracy of searches, specifically whether the Local Land Charges Register could produce correct results without any need for cross checking "Before the Local Land Charges Programme, the biggest part of the job was checking the data before it went out. We believed that if there was nobody doing that check [because the searches would be automated] the searches would never be accurate."

The team also worried about staff resourcing, the quality of data and data cleansing. "They were the big unknowns - genuine concerns at the time, though in hindsight, they really didn't impact us" said Ian Potbury, ICT Team Leader

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Lisa Lewis
Senior Responsible Officer

During the programme

Mid Devon had the support of their excellent planning team throughout the project. They had also converted their microfiche files to digital before entering the Local Land Charges Programme, which no doubt helped their success. However, they credit their successful transition to live service to their Delivery Manager, Daniel Swabey. “Dan was able to bring everybody on board. He kept everybody on their toes. His people-skills really influenced how positively we felt about the project”, said Pauline Davey.

Dan provided the team with excellent project management, ensuring that tasks were manageable and targets achievable. He took the time to listen to concerns and answer any questions, bringing together all the necessary departments within the council to get the job done. This was especially useful to Diane Carne, Assistant LLC officer who started her role just before migration began. She said “He was excellent at sifting through work before handing it over to us, making sure we were only allocated the necessary tasks.”

Lisa Lewis appreciated the access that the team had to HMLR data tools, including the Spatial Web App tool, which pinpoints anomalies or inaccuracies in search extents - a process which would take many hours, days, or even weeks if the team had done it manually. “Allowing us access to the data tools inordinately helped with the identification of those outlier records - it made a huge difference”, said Lisa.

“The process could have been quite daunting with the amount of data being looked at and potentially having to be cleansed. But the help we received from Dan and the team enabled the whole process to run smoothly” said Christopher Southall, Senior GMS Officer.

The search function in the Local Land Charges Register has gone through rigorous user testing, with user feedback informing the way that searches are displayed.

After the programme

“The whole process has been incredibly useful. It has enabled us to have high quality, accurate data in our systems, which can be used by anyone. The outcome has far exceeded our expectations.” said Christopher.

As well as having assurance over their data, the team has found that local land charge searches are quicker and more streamlined, eliminating the need for any cross checking between the LLC1 and the CON29. Fewer hours are being put into local land charge processes, meaning that the Mid Devon team have the capacity to focus on other priorities.

In terms of business as usual in live service, things are running smoothly. The team initially had weekly meetings with their Relationship Manager, Harriet Billau, however, as their confidence grew, they found they were flourishing on their own: “We know that Harriet is there when we need her. If we have any queries, we’ll send her an email - she is always very quick to respond with the answer.”

The search function in the Local Land Charges Register has gone through rigorous user testing, with user feedback informing the way that searches are displayed. This means that all search results are clear, understandable, and uniform. Search results also provide users with

context - signposting customers to the correct department for any queries. For Mid Devon, this translates to a reduction in queries from third parties such as search companies.

Pauline’s initial concerns over the clarity and accuracy of search results have also been

quelled. “Before migration we would go through searches with a fine-tooth comb and remove any charges that related to a neighboring property. One of our biggest worries was that the Land Registry searches would pull through neighboring properties and searches. I think it is useful to let other authorities know that yes, it may well pull through neighboring properties and charges, but it is made very clear to the customer [in the search result] that it isn’t completely part of their search.”

The team have found that their processes around local land charges are streamlined and there is no need to cross check data - they are confident about the data in the system and assured by the accuracy and clarity of search results. “We had confidence in the whole migration, the help we received from Dan and the team enabled the whole process to run smoothly” said Christopher.

“**Allowing us access to the data tools inordinately helped with the identification of those outlier records - it made a huge difference**”

Lisa Lewis
Senior Responsible Officer

What advice would you give to other Authorities?

Mid Devon District Council advises local authorities to start early with data capture and data cleansing, “use every minute you can.” said Pauline. “Think of it as a corporate project, not just a land charges project. Land charges are involved, GMS are involved, IT are involved. It is important to get a team together and get everybody’s buy-in. Don’t leave things to the last minute. Be disciplined and set time aside for tasks. Little and often. We were also fortunate to have the support of our Planning Team, who put in a lot of work relating to the planning data tasks. Their input was hugely important to the overall success of the project!”

“Don’t be afraid to ask questions,” adds Lisa. “Be open about those concepts, even the language and terminology you don’t understand, ask the question because the sooner you understand, the sooner you can move forward.”

“**start early with data capture and data cleansing, use every minute you can**”

Pauline Davey
Senior Local Land Charges officer