



Landscan

JULY

1999

A news update for Land Information New Zealand clients.



Landonline
survey and title automation

Landonline Conversion begins in earnest

Work has now begun on preparing for the major job of converting titles and survey records at the rollout of **Landonline** next year.

EDS (NZ) Ltd has won the contract to convert Land Information New Zealand's records, beginning in Dunedin in March 2000, and will convert around five million title records nationwide into scanned images and structured digital data. LINZ has already imaged 1.4 million survey plans, and EDS will combine the existing digital cadastral database with data from the survey plans to create a new survey-accurate digital cadastre.

Before it can begin conversion, however, it will have to develop a conversion application that will store the data and migrate it to the **Landonline** database.

Once conversion is in full swing, EDS is likely to have more than 200 people working on the project.

EDS will also install and manage the new **Landonline** production server hardware and software. This part of its contract with LINZ will run until March 2005. This is beyond the end of the **Landonline** development and implementation programme, which is expected to end in September 2002.

While there were three separate tenders for titles conversion, survey conversion and facilities management, EDS was successful in all three, and they were combined in a single contract.

The operating system to enable the handling and processing of the titles and survey information is being built in two stages. The first stage, which PricewaterhouseCoopers is currently building, is due for completion in March 2000. At that time it will be implemented in the Otago region, then introduced throughout the rest of the country over a two year period. This stage will allow automated processing of transactions by LINZ, and computer-based searching of the department's digital survey and title records.

LINZ will put construction of the second stage out to tender in early 2000, with a planned completion date of October 2002 for its nationwide implementation. This stage will allow customers to lodge survey plans and routine conveyancing transactions in a digital form. The result will be an integrated, intelligent, digital database of survey and title information, accessible nationwide.

When completed, the **Landonline** programme will save surveyors, lawyers and the general public millions of dollars each year due to the more rapid and simple processing of title and survey transactions, and the electronic availability of title and survey information.

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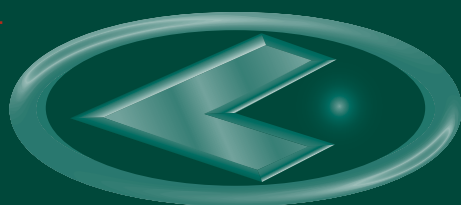
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Volumes of transactions for survey plans and certificates of title can be a barometer for New Zealand's economic and policy climate. Now LINZ has a purpose-built forecasting model to help predict volumes of this business.

8 Are you really, really safe?

The countdown to Y2K is picking up speed. LINZ strongly recommends to clients of Land Title Link that they leave nothing to chance when ensuring their PCs are Y2K compliant.

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Landonline survey and title automation

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Two phases to Landonline

One issue that has cropped up in discussions LINZ has had with customers and stakeholders is the differences between the two phases of **Landonline**.

In the first phase, transactions will be processed within the automated **Landonline** system, and digital information will be accessible on-line. External users will be able to search the database to find records such as certificates of title and survey plans, and will be able to order copies of non-converted records.

Conveyancers and surveyors will still have to lodge documents in paper form. LINZ will scan the documents and return the paper versions of conveyancing dealings to customers, and the digital register will become the official record. LINZ will not be keeping a paper copy of these documents.

However, LINZ will keep the paper survey plans and these will remain the authoritative record.

Paperless lodgement of dealings and plans will only become possible in the second phase of **Landonline**. This will have a greater impact on lodging professionals. Further legislative changes will be required to allow for digital lodgement and to make the digital survey record the authoritative record.

Approximate customer launch dates of first phase of Landonline

- Dunedin** - July 2000
- Christchurch** - November 2000
- Auckland** - May 2001
- Wellington** - September 2001
- Hamilton** - January 2002

Note that these are only approximate dates. The exact launch dates depend on how long it takes to convert the records in each office. Automated processing will commence in LINZ offices several weeks beforehand.

Landonline news hot off the web

If you are connected to the Internet, you can register through the **Landonline** web site for emailed updates of information. To be notified of the latest news or information on the site, fill in the form at <http://www.linz.govt.nz/landonline/register.html>.

Feasibility of electronic conveyancing confirmed

A recent review of the whole **Landonline** programme has confirmed the feasibility of what LINZ is proposing for phase two. An investigation into the feasibility of electronic transactions has confirmed that digital lodgement of data, automated processing of routine transactions, and Internet-type user interfaces are possible.

It is clear from this feasibility study that the first phase provides a solid platform for LINZ to enable digital transactions to be lodged in the future. The study has confirmed that LINZ's earlier assumptions that it should automate only routine conveyancing transactions, such as routine discharge-transfer-mortgage conveyancing transactions, were right. Probably the most difficult aspect of automating processing systems is being able to build the appropriate business rules into the computer programme. Automating straightforward transactions is a very big job; to go beyond them would create a huge task, for relatively little return.

LINZ is also very encouraged that the study showed that the technology to allow a web-type interface for the more complicated functions is developing rapidly. This means that **Landonline** should operate within a standard Internet browser in its later versions. As the technology matures, LINZ should be able to extend access to a greater range of people, which may include allowing the general public to search some records over the Internet. However, professionals wanting to make digital lodgements will still have to connect to LINZ over a secure, private network, rather than the Internet.

Both the NZ Law Society and NZ Institute of Surveyors have provided valuable feedback to LINZ on what users would require from a system that will allow electronic lodgement of title and survey data.

The feedback at this stage from users - both customers and LINZ staff - is that the proposed electronic lodgement system should meet their needs.

Computer requirements to go on-line

LINZ customers wanting to upgrade their computer systems will find that the standard new desktop PCs will be powerful enough to run the **Landonline** software.

The recommended minimum requirements for PCs to run **Landonline** software are:

- Operating system - Windows 95
- Processor - 233 MHz Intel Pentium
- Memory - 64 Mb RAM
- Floppy drive - 1.44 Mb 3.5 inch drive
- Hard drive - 3 Gb drive
- CD-ROM - 12 speed CD-ROM
- Monitor - 17 inch graphics monitor (for viewing scanned historical titles and survey plans)

These specifications are essentially a year old, which means that today's PCs will easily run the **Landonline** software. However, practices that are considering upgrading their computer systems should get the fastest modems they can afford. Ideally, on-line users should have a 56Kb modem as the minimum; a 128Kb, or even an ISDN modem, would allow them to download data faster.

Land Information New Zealand is engaging in a major information gathering exercise as it consults with users of its core paper records. As part of the process, options for future management and access to records will be canvassed with users. Transparency and openness underpin the project.

The department is steward of untold millions of paper records, dating from records of transactions between Maori and the Crown in the 1840s, through to records of new subdivisions approved only hours ago. And the pile is growing by about a million records a year.

With the increase in outsourcing of LINZ operations, access to these records is required by an ever-widening group. The amalgamation of the former Land Titles Office and Valuation New Zealand into LINZ added to an already complex inventory of records – titles, plans, letters, maps, easements, field books and much more.

Some records are accessed on a regular basis; others haven't seen the light of day for decades. How to manage this fast-growing resource is becoming an urgent issue.

The LINZ Automation Project, **Landonline**, will see new survey and title records (and some existing records) transformed into digital files; but while this will greatly improve access to these documents, it won't erode the paper mountain to any great extent.

A Core Paper Records project team headed by Information Services Manager Jenny McDonald is assessing how LINZ can manage and provide access to its hard copy records into the next century. They are investigating how best to respond to changes in the business environment that affect records management; and how to improve systems and processes for record management. At this stage, no decisions have been made as to preferred options.

Stage One of the project is now completed. That involved an office-by-office inventory of what exists now. This is a high-level index and lists the types of records held by LINZ – for example abstracts, documents, plans, and registers for each of the business categories such as Crown, Survey, Titles and Corporate. Offices were asked to identify what records are accessed most and by whom. These patterns will help guide planning.

Stage Two is a scoping exercise looking at all possible options for the way paper records can be managed in future. Jenny McDonald says the team is looking at all options from doing nothing to capturing every paper record as a digital file.

“Neither of those two extremes is viable,” Jenny says, “but we need to look at the whole range before narrowing it down to the most likely options and looking at the practicalities.

“As part of the exercise we are finding out what records our staff and clients are accessing the most. We are also undertaking benchmark research with agencies who are addressing similar issues.”

Consultation is an important part of the process, Jenny says. “We’re using a number of techniques to build a picture of our client and staff needs. The **Landonline** project has already yielded a lot of useful information about usage of paper records. As we start to firm up our ideas we’ll continue and develop this process of consultation.”

While this is going on, the project team are researching the external records management services that are available.

“Stage Three is likely to be seeking expressions of interest from service providers. That should happen between July and October. By the end of the year we will be preparing a business case for LINZ management on the preferred option.”

While this is happening, a transition plan is being prepared to ensure paper records will be secure and accessible if they are moved to a new physical location.

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Jenny McDonald with some of LINZ's many paper records

These days, the terms “transparency” and “accountability” are well entrenched in the lexicon of the government sector. It is the job of Geoff Howard and his group to give these words meaning in the purchase of services by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ).

Geoff is General Manager Contracts. The group of 14, based in the national office of LINZ, has been functioning for some months, but takes its new name and a more focused role from 1 July.

“I was known as the Regulatory Administrator, but with the realignment of our audit group from 1 July, somehow that didn’t really express what we do,” Geoff says. “Our core function is to manage the contracts on behalf of the Crown, between LINZ and the many providers who deliver services.

“As LINZ has withdrawn from direct involvement in operational work over the past several years, the purchasing of services has assumed great importance.”

The Contracts Group acts on behalf of LINZ’s regulatory groups, and will manage the contracts for the Continental Shelf project. As announced in the Budget in May, the Project allows for \$44.4 million worth of work, mainly involved in the mapping of the sea bed over an area covering more than one million square nautical miles.

“Because of the specialised technologies involved, we’ll be working with a wider range of suppliers than those traditionally involved with hydrographic work,” Geoff says.

“Our group is independent and provides transparency in the relationship between the technical specialists in the LINZ regulatory groups and the service providers. By making the process totally transparent, we can better control what our contractors deliver.

“We’ve very quickly discovered that getting the standards and specifications right is the key to a successful contract. In contracting, you get what you ask for, so it pays to get the asking right!”

The Contracts group manages contracts with external providers and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) between different groups within LINZ. The Group also manages Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between LINZ and other departments. At any one time Geoff’s group is managing 70 or more contracts, SLAs or MOUs.

Geoff’s own background is in cartography, specialising in information technology. Before taking up his present role he was General Manager of the Topo/Hydro Group within LINZ. He was heavily involved in the establishment of the digital topographic database, and has co-authored a paper on this ground-breaking achievement. The paper, “A National Topographic Database for the 21st Century” will be presented to the International Cartographic Association next month.

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Geoff Howard, General Manager Contracts

PROTECTION MECHANISM ON THE MOVE

The “Protection Mechanism” for Treaty claimants has been shifted to the Office of Treaty Settlements (OTS) from Land Information New Zealand.

Established in 1993, the Protection Mechanism is a communication system to protect the interests of potential Treaty claimants when Crown land is being sold. An Investigation Unit was originally set up within the Department of Survey and

Land Information to administer the policy and to service the Interdepartmental Officials Committee. A comprehensive database of Maori interests has been compiled for the purpose and the mechanism has proven extremely effective since it was established. This database will also be transferred to the OTS.

Previously an Investigation Unit within LINZ received details of surplus Crown properties, arranged public advertising of those

When the Act regulating registered valuers was passed, the Berlin Airlift was in full swing, murderers were still hanged and Bill Hayley hadn't even thought of rocking around the clock.

Most agree that the 1948 Valuers Act is due for a review, and Valuer General Warwick Quinn – himself considerably younger than the Act – is co-ordinating the process that will lead up to new legislation.

“There are all sorts of mixes we could have in a new Act, but there's general consensus that the 1948 Act is too stringent and prescriptive,” Warwick says. “Its provisions for discipline seemed appropriate in the 1950s, but they're now very heavy handed and formal.

“We still need a level of intervention to protect the interests of the public, but it should be something that resolves problems quickly.

“The current Act also sets out a structure for the Institute of Valuers as an Incorporated Society. Again, that's too much government in today's environment.”

The Ministry of Commerce has issued a paper on a framework for regulating professions and this is being used as a model for the review of the Valuers Act. Both the Institute of Valuers and Valuers Registration Board are being asked for input.

After the feedback has been considered a Cabinet paper will be presented and then a Bill drafted.

There are between 1800 and 2000 valuers in New Zealand, and Warwick says the nature of the valuer's job has changed over the years. “The rules governing the profession need to recognise that the next generation of valuers may want a more diverse career path. I think all parties are agreed on the need for change; it's really a question of degree.”

National Property Database devolution proceeding

While the term “Government Valuation” will probably linger for some years to come, the National Property Database (NPD) that held this information is well on the way to devolution.

Between 1 July and 31 December this year the database will have been taken over by Territorial Authorities (TAs). Funding for the NPD finishes on 30 June 2000, but because the existing database

is not Y2K compliant, it is necessary to complete the handover of data to TAs this year.

Valuer General Warwick Quinn says all TAs have been issued with a handbook on devolution which includes specifications for the maintenance of the data they inherit.

“Feedback from the Authorities has been very positive,” he says. “They're taking the challenge seriously.”

Auckland City Council, which already has its own rating valuation database, will be the first officially devolved Authority from 1 July.

Capital value requirements under scrutiny

The basis for rating valuations is under review. The Rating Powers Act requires local authorities to produce both land and capital valuations, irrespective of whether they use both valuations to set rates.

In fact about two-thirds of local authorities rate on land value, and it has been suggested that they should not be forced to maintain data they do not require.

Warwick Quinn says such a change would require an amendment to the Rating Powers Act. This in turn would flow through to the Rating Valuations Act and Rules, which are administered by the Office of the Valuer General (OVG).

Warwick says the initiative for the review comes from the Department of Internal Affairs as it is a funding issue. The OVG is providing advice on the valuation aspects of the review.

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properties, received applications from Maori claimants and serviced an interdepartmental Officials Committee.

The relationship between LINZ and the OTS was formalised through a Service Level Agreement. However it now makes more sense for this function to be carried out from within the OTS.

One LINZ staff member, Caryl Thomas, will transfer to the OTS from 1 July. Crown Agencies and Government departments intending to dispose of property will now send these details to the OTS rather

than the LINZ Investigation Unit. Treaty claimants will receive the same information as before, but it will be from the OTS rather than LINZ.

All Protection Mechanism enquiries from 1 July 1999 should be referred to: The Office of Treaty Settlements, PO Box 919, Wellington. Attention: Caryl Thomas, Protection Mechanism Co-ordinator. Phone (04) 494 9800.

With a team of just six staff and nearly 5000 decisions to be made on Crown Property transactions in their first 11 months, the Crown Property Clearances Group has its work cut out for it.

Led by Trevor Knowles, Crown Property Clearances is part of the Operations Group of Land Information New Zealand. Members of the group are warranted by the Chief Crown Property Officer to make decisions under a range of legislation governing the sale and purchase of Crown assets.

The Group was established from 1 July last year as part of the restructuring of the former Crown Property Services. The changes saw much of the day-to-day Crown Property work outsourced to Accredited Agents.

Trevor explains that they provide a quality assurance and sign-off function for acquisitions and disposals that have been made by agents on behalf of the Crown.

“Our job is to ensure all the provisions of the relevant legislation have been followed correctly and that risk to the Crown is minimised,” he says. “The offer-back provisions under the Public Works Act and Railways Restructuring Act form a large part of our focus.”

Trevor says that of the 4800 decisions made to date, about 25 percent had to be referred back for clarification. “As everyone gets used to the new processes and standards, I’d expect that proportion to decline,” he says.

Trevor is quietly proud of his group’s performance in its first year. “Our activities are led by a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Chief Crown Property Officer and the General Manager Operations,” he explains.

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Trevor Knowles, Manager Crown Property Clearances

A Privy Council decision on 8 March this year on Horton & Ors vs Attorney General served as a sharp reminder to government departments and Crown Agencies that hold land, that the offer-back provisions of the Public Works Act must be followed carefully.

The case related to Coal Corporation Ltd (Coalcorp) land at Ohinewai near Huntly, and whether the company could change its mind after deciding that the Horton land was surplus to its requirements. The Privy Council upheld the Court of Appeal findings that once certain pre-conditions were satisfied, the Chief Executive of the (then) Lands Department “came under a mandatory obligation to sell”; there was “no further role for the department or agency responsible for the work for which the land was held”; and there was “no room for reconsideration of the earlier decision that the land was not required for a public work”.

Chief Executive of Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), Dr Russ Ballard, has written to each of the Chief Executives of the 215 government departments and Crown agencies that are entitled to hold land under the Public Works Act. These letters advise of the impact of the Privy Council’s decision and the decisions of other courts relating to the timeliness of disposals of surplus land.

Chief Crown Property Officer Sam Brown is responsible for developing standards for Crown property work to enable departments and Crown agencies to meet their obligations under the Public Works Act.

“It is important that land owning agencies give very careful consideration to their future needs before they declare their land to be surplus to their requirements,” Sam says. “Once land is declared surplus if it is not required for another public work, or is exempted from offer-back, the Public Works Act obliges the Chief Executive of LINZ to offer the land to the former owner for re-purchase. There is little opportunity to reconsider whether the land is surplus once that decision has been made. The Chief Executive of LINZ must follow the disposal process through to a conclusion.”

The High Court has also found that Crown vendors are obliged to complete disposals in a reasonable time. Although specific times have not been set, the Court has indicated that the Crown is entitled to a reasonable time to prepare the land for disposal.

“Reasonable” could be 9-12 months, but longer periods may be justified for complex disposals that require surveys or resource consents, or else involve former multiple-owned Maori land where significant effort is required to identify the people who are entitled to an offer of re-purchase.

Sam says, “it is important to move the disposal process along once the decision has been taken that land is surplus. Undue delay in offering a property for re-purchase could result in financial loss for Crown vendors. If a long delay results in the market price of the land rising significantly, Crown vendors could be forced to sell to a former owner at earlier and lower values.”

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When Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) negotiates its outputs with the Government, the question of resourcing needs and revenue streams naturally arises. Predicting these has not always been straightforward because much of LINZ's workload is dictated by what goes on in the private sector. This job has now become easier.

LINZ commissioned a forecasting model to predict levels of activity for its operations group, and figures for the 1999/2000 financial year have been released.

The model, fashioned for the department by economic forecasters BERL, takes into account house prices, mortgage interest rates, migration patterns, GDP and LINZ's own resources. The forecast figures for 1999/2000 are:

- Plans lodged: 15,000 (range 13,000 - 17,000)
- Certificates of title issued/re-issued: 800,000 (range 600,000 - 1,000,000)
- Survey and title document searches: 1,250,000 (title searches 700,000 - 800,000, survey searches 350,000 - 650,000)

Geoff Howard, General Manager Contracts, is on the four-person Survey and Title Forecasting Committee, established earlier this year. He says the forecasting model will help LINZ plan staffing and resource deployment to meet demand, while also predicting revenue streams.

"I'm responsible for managing the purchase agreement between our CEO and the Operations Group for the delivery of services," Geoff explains. "It's important that this agreement is based on accurate data."

Carolina Gartner, General Manager Operations, says the forecasts will be an important business planning tool for her group. "It's part

of our management information and it will be always made publicly available."

She says the volumes of business transacted are constantly fluctuating.

"Volumes have been falling recently as a reflection of the economic slowdown, but then factors such as lower interest rates will push activity back up again. Immigration was causing a major impact, but that effect has virtually dried up.

"You also get cyclical patterns. Every election year activity slows down until the shape of the new government becomes clear, and every year there are two 'rush' periods – one at the end of the financial year and one before Christmas as people try to clear their desks before the holidays.

"It will be helpful to have our volumes and patterns of business predicted on a more scientific basis," she says.

Geoff Howard says that once the national patterns are established, the model can be refined to look at regional needs.

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DIGITAL MAPPING MILESTONE



The technology of map-making has taken a giant leap forward with the release in July of the completed digital topographic database. The four-year project was begun by the former Department of Survey and Land Information and completed under contract for the National Topography/Hydrography Authority of LINZ by Terralink NZ Ltd. The vector database incorporates all 330 sheets of the mainstay 1:50,000 scale topo map series into 12 gigabytes of data.

Having the data represented on this map series has become a necessity for emergency and utility organisations, local authorities and map producers – even the creators of television weather maps.

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