



Work & Play Profile Series Mark Gray

Getting a Lay of the Land

Mark Gray speaks to Antony Harvey, a Director in our Central Government practice. Mark works for His Majesty's Land Registry on a major project to transform the technology and automation of the organisation.

Could you start by telling us who you are and what you do at the moment?

My name is Mark Gray and I'm Chief Transformation and Technology Officer for HM Land Registry. I lead a team of about 900 talented colleagues, and we're responsible both for all HMLR's technology today and for the organisation's ambitions to transform our solutions and systems going forward. The Land Register contains over 26 million titles and protects £8 trillion of property assets in the UK, so we take that responsibility very seriously!

What is your background? How did you get where you are today? The first part of my career was in the private sector – in strategy consulting and in financial services. Then I spent seven years leading the digital transformation of the Crown Prosecution Service, before moving across to HMLR last summer.

What has been the highlight of your role at HM Land Registry? There are lots already – it is a great organisation full of dedicated people, and I love the opportunity both to help improve our service today and to shape the future of a truly digitalised property sector. But if I have to pick one specific highlight, I'd probably call out some of the strides we've already made in automating key processes – like the addition of a new mortgage onto the land register – which will save so much time for our colleagues and ultimately for our customers.

The new government has pledged to build 1.5 million new homes – what are the challenges they are likely to face in this? I suspect others are much better placed than I am to comment on this! I think the government has already outlined that this level of ambition will require difficult decisions to be made that help to evolve the planning system and wider housing market.

What challenges does this present to HM Land Registry? The work of HMLR will not be a barrier to the achievement of this pledge. We already handle over 200,000 service requests every single day, and process well over 99% of these instantaneously or within three days. Additional activity in the market does of course bring extra work, and we will need to continue investing in our people and in digitalisation to continue to meet fluctuating market demands



What is the biggest learning you have taken from your current role so far? Good question! I think the biggest thing – both here and in my previous role in criminal justice – has been about the importance of whole-system thinking. If we only solve one piece of the puzzle, or only meet the needs of a subset of stakeholders, then we won't achieve the truly transformative change that we aspire towards.

Quickfire

What do you like to do outside the office? Lots of my time is spent with my wife and two young children. Beyond that, I'm a keen football player and supporter, a master-level chess player, and a big curry eater!

What's your favourite movie? Not a big movie person in truth, but would probably go for Shawshank Redemption.

What is the best piece of advice you have been given? I'm sure there are many. One that springs to mind is that great leadership also requires great followership, so its equally important to play both roles.

Where is the best place you've ever been? New Zealand – so varied and so beautiful.

Dogs or cats? Dogs – we own a lovely (if extremely lazy) greyhound.

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