



# Annual Report 2001 Summary

**"A Year of Achievement"**

**Law Commission**

Report Law Com No 275 (Summary)

26 March 2002

## Highlights

The culmination of the major **land registration** project, in collaboration with HM Land Registry, was undoubtedly the main highlight of the year. This was the largest single project ever undertaken by the Commission.

The 90 page draft Bill was introduced in Parliament even before the report had been published, and on 26 February 2002 the Bill received Royal Assent. The Land Registration Act 2002, as it now is, will revolutionise the system of land registration, which affects millions of people each year and which dates from legislation dating back to 1925. It will also make possible the development of an electronic conveyancing system, to replace the current paper-based system, and enable land and property transactions to be completed electronically. This will also make the property transaction process more open and efficient.

During the year, the Commission also completed a number of other large projects, including a comprehensive review of the **law of limitations**, and proposals for the reform of the law of **double jeopardy**, which attracted wide public interest.

The Commission published its Eighth Programme of Law Reform in October 2001.

The current law reform programme includes items that give effect to the Lord Chancellor's policy of encouraging, where possible, closer co-ordination with current Government priorities. For example, a project on **partnership law** complements the Government's own review of company law. Also, the Commission is working closely with DTLR on reforms to **housing law** and the **compulsory purchase** system. And following support in a recent White Paper, the Commission has renewed its work on proposals for a **criminal code**.

A cautionary note is also struck. The Commission recognises that it may take on projects that might have to wait for implementation until pressure on the legislative timetable is easier. However, it expresses concern over the slow rate of implementing even those reports which the Government has already accepted. It says this is a problem which must be addressed, if modernisation of the law is to be achieved.

## Current Major Law Reform Projects

Housing Law Publication of Local Authority Reports (following the Waterhouse Report into child abuse in North Wales) Offences of Fraud Codification of Criminal Law	Partnership Law Unfair Terms in Contracts Property Rights of Those who Share Homes Trustee Exemption Clauses Compulsory Purchase
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**[For an Outline of the Annual Report – please turn over]**

## In Outline

**Part I** gives an at-a-glance summary of 2001, a year in which the Commission issued 13 publications. These included 6 law reform reports, whose subjects ranged from evidence of bad character in criminal proceedings to limitation periods. In addition, a tour de force report on land registration was published, containing a 90 page draft Bill which, on 26 February 2002, received Royal Assent (see further overleaf, under "Highlights").

**Part II** sets out the main features of the year. It includes a progress report on the targets that were set for the year 2001, and details of new targets for 2002.

**Part III** concentrates on the implementation record of previous Law Commission reports. It gives a convenient summary of any progress by the Government on those reports during the year, and also mentions 33 instances where the highest courts referred to the Commission's work.

**Parts IV – VIII** give the usual descriptions of the work of the law reform and statute law teams during the year. A new team, dealing with housing and administrative justice, was established in 2001, with a new programme of work: full details can be found in Part VI.

**Part IX** contains a description of the Commission's outside contacts during the year.

**Part X** covers its staff and other resources.

**Appendix A** summarises the Commission's role and methods. This will be especially informative for those unfamiliar with the Commission.

**Appendix B** lists the main Law Commission reports which have been implemented since 1985.

**Appendix C** lists the 27 reports that remained unimplemented at the end of 2001. Of these, 12 had been accepted by the Government, in full or in part, and were awaiting the availability of Parliamentary time.

**Appendix D** gives a list of visitors to the Commission from overseas.

**Appendix E** gives a list of contact points at the Commission.

**Appendix F** shows the cost of the Commission in 2001.

**The Annual Report (LC275) is available on the Library page of the Commission's web site at <http://www.lawcom.gov.uk>.**