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Duchy's land holdings to be revealed

By Tom Sloan

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THE extent of Royal land holdings around Burton will soon be made public under a scheme to register every acre in the country in the biggest land survey in nearly 1,000 years.

The Duchy of Lancaster, which belongs to the Queen, owns Tutbury Castle, Tatenhill Airfield and 7,500 acres of land around Needwood as part of one of the biggest estates in the country.

However, how big the Duchy's estate actually is remains a mystery, as not all of the land is publicly registered.

Now, under a Government-sponsored scheme, the Land Registry is attempting to plot every single acre of Britain — with any landowner refusing facing possible penalties.

The move is the biggest attempt since the Domesday Book of 1085-86 to ascertain land ownership in the UK.

The Duchy is keen on getting its lands, including those around Burton, registered officially.

Paul Clarke, chief executive and clerk of the council for the Duchy, said: "We are already well on the way to registering all our titles. We have done 125,000 acres of foreshore and two estates in Lancashire.

"The process is ongoing. With ancient inheritances there's a lot of research to be done."

Vymer Speakman, register development manager at the Land Registry's Lancashire office, said: "I have suggested a method of dealing with encroaching registrations on the tidal creeks to the Duchy and they were very keen to explore it.

"They were also receptive to the idea that registration would better protect their interests."

The Duchy of Lancaster originated in 1265 when King Henry III granted lands across Britain to his son, Edmund.

Now valued at around £341 million, the estimated 18,700 hectares of land across England and Wales is one of the UK's biggest estates and belongs to the monarch of the day.

Registration of all landholdings is expected to take two years.

Most of urban Britain has been registered but rural holdings remain a grey area.

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So far, the National Trust, the Forestry Commission and the Church of England have agreed to have their land registered.



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