

Merry Christmas

# SEARCHLIGHT

Essential information for property professionals

Issue 30, Dec 2017

*Welcome to Searchlight. In this Christmas edition we bring you a sneak preview of our new ordering site, introduce both our newest staff member and latest searches, and offer you the chance to win a festive hamper in our competition.*

## MADE TO ORDER



***Our new ordering system is almost here. Searchlight gives you an exclusive preview of what to expect.***

Being able to order and receive searches electronically is an essential part of modern-day conveyancing. Here at Severn Trent Searches this is something we've long offered our customers. Our current system was introduced in 2008, and has been updated on a number of occasions since then.

But even the best technology eventually gets outdated. That's why we've decided it's time for an upgrade.

We've been working for some time now to develop a new, state-of-the-art ordering system, combining all the features our customers know alongside a number of new developments.

"We're confident that our new site will be a big hit with customers," said business development manager Owen Davies. "We're aware customers are familiar with the current site, and we'd like to reassure them that the new one will be equally user-friendly."

Our new site will be launching in early 2018. Designed by our in-house team, the new site is custom-made to provide everything our customers need. Over the last few years we have undertaken extensive research, including feedback from a number of our customers into what they want from an ordering platform. This has given us valuable insight, and we've incorporated many new features, as well as keeping and updating those existing ones our customers value.

Continued overleaf

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## NEW FEATURES

While the updated site will be familiar to anyone who's used our current one, there's a host of new features designed to improve users' experience. Here's some of the highlights:

### 1 QUOTE SYSTEM

Invaluable to conveyancers, our system now allows you to find out how much searches will cost prior to placing an order. Simply tell us which searches you require, and our system both emails you a quote, and stores it on our system for 30 days, making it easy for you to convert into an order.

BASKET (2)	
Residential CON29DW £47.00	
Residential STL Local Authority Search £50.00	
Estimated Completion	DEC 22
<input type="button" value="Save Quote"/> <input type="button" value="Place Order"/>	

### 3 FAVOURITE SEARCHES

YOUR FAVOURITES	
★ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Residential CON29DW ⓘ
★ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Residential STL Local Authority Search ⓘ

Do you have a selection of searches you usually order? The site now offers you the opportunity to 'favourite' searches. Highlight the searches you regularly order and they will appear at the top of your Homescreen alongside the CON29DW. This allows you to access all your favourite searches instantly the next time you place an order.

### 5 TURNAROUND TIMES

Want to know how long a search will take before you order it? We routinely monitor how long our suppliers take to deliver searches, as well as the times for those produced in-house. These will feed into our ordering system and be displayed for customers, allowing you to accurately gauge when you'll receive your searches.

PRODUCT		DAYS
☆ <input type="checkbox"/>	Residential CON29DW Flood+ ⓘ	1
☆ <input type="checkbox"/>	Groundsure Flood ⓘ	3

### 6 RECOMMENDED SEARCHES

Recommended Products		
<i>These products are recommended for the property you selected</i>		
PRODUCT	DAYS	PRICE (+VAT)
<input type="checkbox"/> Res LLC1 & CON29 Amber Valley ⓘ	6	£42.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Residential Coal Mining Report ⓘ	5	£25.00

Although searches such as the CON29DW and local authority are standard in any transaction, other essential searches vary by area. The importance of searches such as coal and flood are dependent on where the property is located, and it's not always obvious which ones you need in order to ensure due diligence. Whenever you enter a property address the site will present you with a list of the recommended searches, based on the identified hazards.

### 7 EASIER ORDERING PROCESS

One of the most common pieces of feedback we've had about our current site is that the ordering process can be convoluted. We've shortened it, with fewer screens to complete, made it easier to upload and review supporting documents (such

as plans), and improved facilities for customers who pay by card. We've also redesigned the emails we send to confirm your order, meaning they'll be clearer and easier to locate information.



\*Please note: Screenshots are not representative of the finished ordering platform

## 2 COLOUR-CODED SECTIONS

Based on customer feedback, we've introduced different colour schemes for the residential, commercial and packages sections of the site. This assists customers in easily navigating the site and locating searches.

Residential

Commercial

Discount Packages

## 4 IMPROVED QUERY FACILITY

Although our ordering site already allows us to talk to customers about queries on their searches, we've upgraded this facility, making it easy for customers to talk to us about outstanding orders, or to query a search result. The site also allows us to contact customers should we need additional information to complete a search.

Open Queries

Closed Queries

DATE	DETAILS	STATUS
NOV 20	1, SAMPLE AVENUE, SOME TOWN, SOMEWHERE, NG1 1GN 14:42 PM by Technician <a href="#">[Order #123456]</a>	<a href="#">Reply</a>
NOV 25	7, SAMPLE ROAD, SOME TOWN, SOMEWHERE, LE1 1EL 09:36 PM by Technician <a href="#">[Order #789101]</a>	<a href="#">Details</a>

The initial launch is only the start. We'll be looking at a number of further developments to be introduced over time. These include the ability to plot properties on a map, improved account management and more comprehensive pricing for local authority searches.

If this all sounds a bit complicated, don't worry. The new site is designed to both be familiar to current users, and completely intuitive for new visitors. We'll also be making training guides available on [severntrentsearches.com](#). If that's not enough, our customer services staff are only a phone call away, or alternatively we'll be happy to come out to your office and demonstrate the site to you.

We'll be contacting customers with full details just prior to the site's launch in early 2018. It's been a lot of work, but we think it's been worth it. We can't wait to hear what you think.

## HAVE YOU VISITED OUR WEBSITE LATELY?

*Our website's had a bit of a makeover.*

We've worked hard over the last few years to make [severntrentsearches.com](#) the most authoritative, comprehensive site we can. From detailed information on our range of searches, full pricing of all our products, maps of the Severn Trent region, to training guides and housing market information; we've invested a lot of time and effort to make the site a valuable resource.

Over the last year we've been adding to this. You may have noticed (at least we hope you did) that we've cut Searchlight down to once a year. The reason we did this was to focus more on online content.

We've posted numerous news stories, competitions, details of our charity work, staff profiles, as well as more in-depth articles such as comparisons between the CON29DW and regulated searches, and a guide to England and Wales's convoluted local authority structure. We've also occasionally indulged ourselves with (we think) amusing Halloween and Valentine's-themed searches, as well as our 'indispensable' guide to the best sewers in films.



Possibly of more use is a series we've been running called 'The CON29DW explained.' Designed for both homebuyers and conveyancers, the series takes a monthly, in-depth look at a different area covered by the search, explaining the implications of various answers, and raising any potential areas of concern. Since we started, it's become the most popular feature on our website. We're currently around two thirds of the way through the search, but all the past articles are archived on the site.

We post all the articles on social media, and we've added a comment section to each story, allowing you to give us your thoughts. So pay a visit and join in the conversation.

All of the articles can be viewed in either the **Press Room** or **About Us** sections of [severntrentsearches.com](#).

# WE LOVE IT WHEN PLANS COME TOGETHER

*Our new product is proving a big hit with customers.*

One of the most common requests we receive at Severn Trent Searches is for copies of sewer and water maps, but without a full drainage and water search. And now we're able to accommodate these requests.

While the information in a CON29DW or commercial drainage and water search is essential for conveyancing purposes, there are circumstances where customers only need to know the location of mains.



Developers or builders wishing to ensure an area is clear of water company assets will need to establish their location. A plan is essential for those wishing to establish a connection to the public mains. Utility companies excavating public roads also need to check the location of other companies' assets.

The sewer and water plans search contains extracts from Severn Trent's public sewer and water records, along with a key describing the symbols on the plan. Technical information such as sewer depths, sizes and invert levels are included: essential for those working close to company assets or wishing to connect.

Also included is information regarding working near to Severn Trent assets, along with contact information for the relevant departments.

The search is backed by the same thorough terms and conditions that cover our range of drainage and water searches.

While this search is ideal for those intending to work around Severn Trent assets, it is not intended for conveyancing purposes. Maps aside, none of the information found in other drainage and water searches is included. The search does not confirm whether a property is connected to public water and sewer systems – essential to any purchase – or any of the information relating to billing, adoption agreements, water meters or the other questions found in drainage and water searches.

The sewer and water plans search can be found in the utilities section of our ordering site, price **£39.00 (£46.80 inc. VAT)**.

## A GRAND MISTAKE

*The cost of drainage and water issues exposed in Channel 4 show.*

Viewers of a recent episode of Channel 4's Grand Designs may have seen a textbook example of the issues raised in the CON29DW.

The opening episode of the most recent series – which covers ambitious house-building and renovation projects – told the story of couple Jon and Gill Flowers, who were building their dream house in the Malvern Hills.

The couple were returning to the UK after three years in New Zealand, and paid £145,000 for a plot of land and another £420,000 to construct their home.

Towards the end of the project however, they hit an unexpected snag. Although the property was located near to other houses, it turned out that their home was in what presenter Kevin McCloud described as a "utility blackspot."

Instead of being located in the road outside the property (as is usual) the nearest public water mains, sewers, and electricity cables were all located down the road, some 65 metres from the house.

"We did know how far away the water was through our solicitor," Jon told us, "but we didn't research the cost of excavation because the plot was relatively inexpensive."

Instead of the £5,000 the couple had budgeted for utility connections, the bill came to around £40,000, including paying for an extended road closure while pipes were laid.

"I think an indication to clients of the potential estimated costs could be useful," says Jon.

*"It was more distressing for us because we were digging up the road when the house was nearly finished."*

Jon and Gill's case highlights not only the importance of obtaining searches, but also how important it is that solicitors discuss all the implications with their clients.

Homebuyers are often unaware of the importance of issues raised in their searches, and mistakes or omissions can have costly ramifications. With the CON29DW, we have a specialist team who are able to discuss any issues raised with either conveyancers or their clients.

# CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

*It's the Searchlight Christmas quiz - an older, and better tradition than 'elf on the shelf.'*

This year we've got a seasonal crossword for you. Simply solve the crossword, then rearrange the highlighted letters to form a Christmas-related word (hint: it features in the title of a popular carol) and send it to us using the details below. There's a sensational Christmas hamper on offer for the lucky winner!

## Across

- 1 (and 1 down) Nice place for a walk (6,10)
- 3 Seasonal songs (6)
- 6 Foxy reindeer (5)
- 7 Seasonal nickname in scrim box (6)
- 9 A reverse Leon (4)
- 10 Confused lad plan (7)
- 12 (and 8 down) Controversial xmas dinner addition (8,7)
- 15 Optimistic Christmas thinking (4)
- 16 Nice and naughty records (5)
- 17 Misspelt foul drink (6)
- 18 Alcoholic-based wintery projective (8)

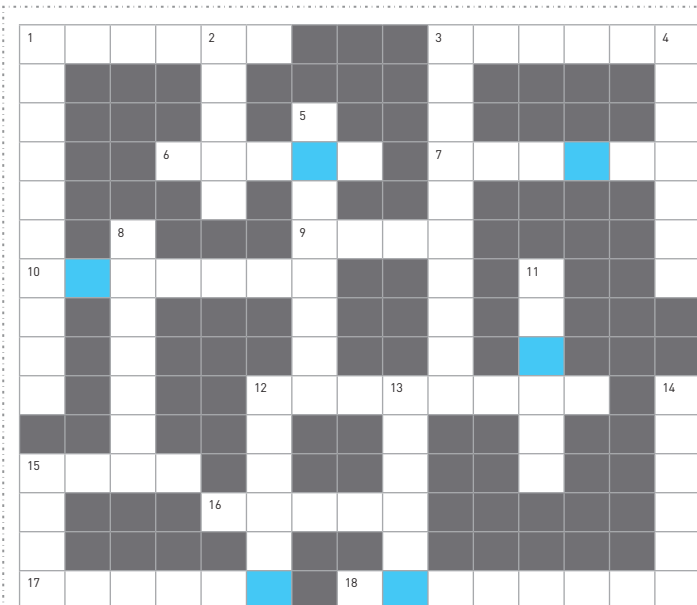
## Down

- 1 See 1 across
- 2 He had a blue Christmas (5)
- 3 Cocoa-based seasonal treats (10)
- 4 (and 11 down) Frugal business partners (7, 6)
- 5 Traditionally eight, now nine (8)
- 8 See 12 across
- 11 See 4 down
- 12 Pugilistic follow-up day (6)
- 13 Winter is one of four (6)
- 14 Glittery decoration (6)
- 15 Men bearing gifts (4)

Send your completed quiz to us at:

### Searchlight 30 competition

Severn Trent Searches  
PO BOX 10155, Nottingham, NG1 9HQ  
DX723860, Nottingham 43



**SECRET ANSWER**    \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

Your Name .....

Firm Name .....

Telephone Number .....

Email Address .....

Alternatively, you can email your entries to [business@severntrentsearches.com](mailto:business@severntrentsearches.com). Competition closes Friday 15th December 2017.

Please include your name, firm, contact telephone number and email address.

The winner will be notified and the prize delivered shortly after the closing date of the competition. Terms and conditions apply – these can be found on the 'News' page of our website: [www.severntrentsearches.com/category/news](http://www.severntrentsearches.com/category/news)

## NEW PRODUCTS

*We've added new mining and utility searches.*

Here at Severn Trent Searches we're always looking to bring you innovative new products from leading search suppliers, and we've recently been making a few additions to our portfolio.

Firstly, Landmark Information Group offer their new Homecheck mining and subsidence search. This combines the information previously available in their ground stability search with data showing risk from subsidence. The search identifies potential ground stability issues from current and former mining activities, landfill and natural sources. In addition, the search looks at insurance claims for subsidence in the vicinity of the property. The Homecheck mining and subsidence search costs just £20.00 (£24.00 inc. VAT).

We've also introduced another ground stability report, this time from Future Climate Info. Their report incorporates subsidence insurance claims data from Property Assure, and is priced at £15.00 (£18.00 inc. VAT).

We have expanded our range of utility searches, offering the National Grid transmission search, priced £78.83 (£94.60 inc. VAT). The search details the location of apparatus used for the nationwide transmission of gas and electricity.

We have also recently updated the price of many utility searches, including our popular utility packages, which combine gas and electric distribution searches, BT wayleaves and either a Commercial Standard or Extra drainage and water search.

In addition, Landmark have recently retired two of their searches for commercial properties – Sitecheck Data and Sitesolutions Brief. They have also made some adjustments to their popular Sitecheck Assess product.

Full details of all our searches, including pricing, can be found on [www.severntrentsearches.com](http://www.severntrentsearches.com)



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## CPD

### *In need of some CPD training? We can help.*

Besides being one of the ten official providers of the CON29DW, Severn Trent Searches also provides training on the many issues raised by the search.

Our one hour CPD covers the four areas of the search - plans, drainage, water supply and charging - and provides an in-depth look at related issues and potential areas of concern for homebuyers.

Every year we put on an event at a different location, enabling customers from all over the Severn Trent region to have a chance to attend. In recent years we have used a number of venues including prestigious locations such as Warwick Castle and Leicester's National Space Centre.

This year's event was more low-key than some, taking place at the Harvest Fields Centre in Sutton Coldfield. A large percentage of our customers are based in the West Midlands, and this location enabled many of them to come and hear our presentation.

One advantage of a large event is that we are able to invite guest speakers to present alongside ourselves. This year we were delighted to be joined by colleagues from both the Coal Authority and environmental search provider Future Climate Info, who came to discuss their range of searches and issues surrounding them.



The section on the CON29DW was presented by Owen Davies, our business development manager. Owen has been presenting on the CON29DW for over ten years, and has trained hundreds of solicitors and conveyancers on drainage and water issues.

If you're not able to attend one of our annual events, Owen is happy to visit solicitors' offices and present to them directly. We are able to offer this service to non-customers as well as those who currently order from us.

If you'd like to arrange for a CPD, please call us on 0115 971 3550 or email [business@severntrentsearches.com](mailto:business@severntrentsearches.com)

## MEET PETER

### *Get to know Peter Lambert – our new sales manager – a little better.*

#### **Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?**

I have been working in sales for over 40 years in a variety of roles. From large companies through to small independent businesses. I also ran my own business.

#### **What will your role at Severn Trent Searches be?**

A newly developed role within Severn Trent Searches as sales manager. My role will be to develop and increase new business sales with both new and existing clients, promoting our fantastic new and updated website and search facilities.



#### **Are you looking forward to meeting our customers?**

I have only had a few meetings with some of our clients so far, but I am looking forward to having more opportunities in the future to meet existing and new clients face to face and build successful relationships.

#### **What do you like to do in your spare time?**

I am a keen fisherman - and I am a member of a local angling club, where we do match fishing at weekends. I play 5-a-side football to try and stay fit. I also enjoy going out for meals with my wife.

#### **Tell us something surprising about yourself.**

I am surprised that I still play 5-a-side football at a very good level, and still try to compete with the youngsters, when I am approaching my 60th birthday.

#### **What's the most embarrassing thing that's ever happened to you at work?**

Whilst working in the solar industry as a surveyor, I had to climb onto a roof to do measurements. Whilst up there the ladder slipped, leaving me stranded. Fortunately, I had my phone in my pocket and had to phone the client to help me down. How embarrassing!

If you'd like to discuss our range of searches, or anything else with Peter, you can contact him on 07387 240985 or email [Peter.Lambert@stservices.co.uk](mailto:Peter.Lambert@stservices.co.uk)

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