

## Minerals – A Legal Perspective

Who owns them, why and how?

What is a (legal) mineral?



The exploitation and development of the UK's natural resources has been the bedrock of the country's progress through feudal times, the industrial revolution and North Sea oil and gas. Who owns them, why and how is rooted in history and has created a patchwork of interests. The Land Registry, the country's definitive record of title interests, has only just started to come to terms with mineral ownership after dealing with surface ownership for nearly 100 years.

The legal definition of a mineral (to the extent that there is one at all) is not one a geologist (or many other people) would predict or even recognise. Again rooted in history and struggling to take into account changes in society and developments in industry and technology, mineral rights can be used to ransom or prevent housing and other developments and industrial activity and give rise to compensation and damage claims, but only if you actually own something which is, as far as the law is concerned, a mineral.

This seminar will take a whistle-stop tour through the origins and recording of legal mineral titles and the nature of existing mineral interests. It will then outline the case law applying to legal arguments about whether or not something is a "mineral" and how the answer to that question in relation to the same substance may vary by location and over time.



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Stephen has a niche expertise in manorial and mines and minerals law including coal mining and brine subsidence claims. He has acted for and against landed estates, farmers, landowners, property developers and mineral operators in disputes involving mineral rights, including for a power station and one which turned on the interpretation of a grant written in pidgin Latin and signed by Queen Elizabeth I.

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