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£3 makes virtual tycoon Ray new Mayor of Hemel Hempstead

By [Jonathan Matfin](#)

An Australian man has bought Hemel Hempstead and everything in it for £3.

But don't panic – the sale was made on a new website where internet surfers trade in virtual copies of real places and properties.

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At [www.weblo.com](#), the rights to Hemel Hempstead have been snapped up for just over \$6 (about £3) by Ray Doyle, of Sydney, Australia.

He told *The Gazette* this week via email: "I bought it just as an investment. There is a reasonably large population in Hemel Hempstead, so I thought if Weblo takes off it will go up in value and I might make a bit of money."

Weblo works by creating virtual copies of real places and properties on the internet that people can buy and sell.

The virtual version of Tokyo in Japan is currently priced at \$25,000 (around £12,500) and the virtual version of the Statue of Liberty in New York is priced at an incredible \$500,000 (over £250,000).

By buying the rights to the virtual version of Hemel Hempstead on Weblo, Ray has become 'mayor' of the town.

The title gives Ray control of the page on Weblo that represents Hemel Hempstead – a space that currently features facts and some photos of the town.

Under the rules of Weblo, Ray gets a cut of all online advertising revenue generated by the Hemel Hempstead page.

The man from *Down Under* will also earn money each time virtual copies of properties in Hemel Hempstead are sold on the virtual world site.

Ray explained: "I haven't had much interest as yet – only about 50 hits (visits to the Hemel Hempstead page) and a few cents from the advertisements.

"I expect that to change in the next few months as Weblo becomes more popular in the UK."

In total, Ray currently owns 86 towns and cities on Weblo, including Salford, Blackburn and Bognor Regis.

The website also offers the chance to buy web pages devoted to stars and celebrities.

Virtual tycoon Ray has also moved into that market, having bought a page for fans of Australian cricket legend Sir Donald Bradman.

Weblo is one of several websites to spring up in recent years offering people the chance to make real money out of virtual property.

The most well-known globally is the 3-D virtual world site [www.secondlife.com](#), which currently has more than 5.5million users worldwide.

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