



VALUATION & LANDS
AGENCY

BUSINESS PLAN
2005-06

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Section	1.	INTRODUCTION
	1.1	Our Business
	2.	PLANNING
	2.1	Planning Environment
	2.2	Planning Process
	2.3	Vision and Mission
	2.4	Staff Resources
	2.5	Financial Resources
	3.	MAJOR PROJECTS
	3.1	VLA / RCA Unification
	3.2	Domestic Revaluation
	3.3	Public Interface Project
	4.	TARGETS
	4.1	Ministerial Targets
Annex	A	BALANCED SCORECARD
	B	OFFICE NETWORK

FOREWORD

The Valuation and Lands Agency (VLA) has been in existence, under various names, for over 150 years and has throughout that time been responsible for providing a valuation service for rating purposes. This year will see two of the most significant changes in our history as we complete a Domestic Revaluation based on capital values and, in order to modernise and improve the rating service to our customers, we prepare for unification with the Rate Collection Agency on 1 April 2007.

Both of these events pose significant challenges for the year ahead but will, we believe, result in a rating service that meets the expectations of ratepayers of a transparent and integrated public service.

The move away from the former Net Annual Value (NAV) basis of rating assessment has involved the Agency in the development of leading-edge Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) techniques and the advanced IT systems on which the new Valuation List will be maintained. This year will see the full implementation of those systems, providing the Agency's staff with access to the tools and information systems to carry out their work effectively and efficiently.

Alongside its rating valuation service the Agency will, of course, continue to deliver a high quality valuation and property advice service to its public sector clients.

VLA will monitor progress against Key Targets set by the Minister, as contained in this Plan. Additionally, we will test ourselves against a range of Performance Indicators covering all aspects of our business. Our internal targets are in line with those set by the Department in its Public Service and Service Delivery Agreements.

The Agency has again used a Balanced Scorecard approach to planning, developing objectives and targets focussed on achievement of our business goals. Management Board will undertake monitoring, on a monthly basis throughout the life of this Plan.

This will clearly be another very busy year for the Agency. I am confident that with the support and dedication of everyone in the Agency and by working with our Departmental and wider public sector colleagues we will achieve our goals.

Nigel Woods

Commissioner of Valuation
and Chief Executive

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Our Business

The Valuation and Lands Agency was formed in April 1993 as an Executive Agency within the Department of Finance and Personnel. Originally known as the Valuation Office we have been responsible for rating assessments, and since 1945, for a range of general valuation and estate management services within the public sector.

Our main business areas and associated goals are:

DOMESTIC RATING:

“To maintain a Domestic Rating Assessment Service that achieves high credibility with all stakeholders, delivering regular Revaluations, the next by April 2006”.

NON-DOMESTIC RATING:

“To maintain a Non-Domestic Rating Assessment Service that achieves high credibility with all stakeholders”.

CLIENT SERVICES:

“To deliver a Valuation and Advice Service to the public sector which achieves high levels of satisfaction with all stakeholders”.

The mandate for these activities flows from the departmental Objective 2 - “To deliver efficient and cost effective services to the public in the Department’s areas of executive responsibility”. In addition, we were mandated to undertake our estate management and advisory functions, following a report by the Northern Ireland Efficiency Scrutiny on the “Management and Disposal of Government Owned Land” (March 1994).

2. PLANNING CONTEXT

2.1 Planning Environment

In its Public Service Agreement (PSA) the Department of Finance and Personnel sets out how it will undertake its responsibilities under the Government paper “Building on Progress: Priorities and Plans 2005-08”. In its Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) the Department details how it will achieve the associated objectives and outcomes. Both these documents are contained within the Department’s Business Plan (available on the website www.dfpni.gov.uk).

This Business Plan establishes Key Ministerial Targets and sets out how we will monitor our progress towards achievement. It also takes into account our responsibilities to support departmental corporate targets.

The DFP aim is "To secure the most appropriate and effective use of resources and services for the benefit of the community". Within this aim the Department has two strategic objectives:

- "To prioritise the use of resources available to Northern Ireland, ensure that they are used efficiently and secure the reform and modernisation of public services".
- "To deliver efficient and cost effective services to the public in the Department's areas of executive responsibility".

In pursuance of this second departmental objective the Agency delivers its 3 main business areas of maintaining the Valuation List for both Domestic and Non-Domestic properties and providing a valuation, estate management and property advisory service.

The Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) includes details of targets relating to VLA and links directly to our Business Plan. It describes performance targets for service delivery; plans for rating reform and for the raising of service standards.

2.2 Planning Process

As in the previous year, the Agency is using the Balanced Scorecard approach. This has assisted the Agency's Management Board to focus on the key goals and success factors that will lead the Agency towards the achievement of its Vision and Mission within the context of its framework document and legal mandates.

The Minister's announcement in December 2002 of rating reforms, a Domestic Revaluation and the decision to change to capital value as the basis for the domestic rating system in Northern Ireland continue to be key factors in the planning process for 2005-06.

Alongside the completion of the Revaluation a key objective for 2005-06 is the creation of an efficient and effective Public Interface to handle the anticipated number of contacts from ratepayers following publication of the New List.

The timely implementation of the new IT Core System Replacement is critical to the Agency's ability to take forward the revaluation of Domestic property on a capital value basis, whilst maintaining the current Valuation List on a rental basis. Phase I work is well advanced, with plans for the new system to be fully operational by November 2005.

2.3 Vision and Mission

Our Vision is:

“To be recognised as a leading public sector valuation organisation.”

Our Mission is:

“To provide a property valuation and advice service which: meets the needs of DFP in the fair operation of the property taxation system and of the public sector in carrying out its functions; and is open and accessible to the public in general.”

The Balanced Scorecard (see attached) details how the Agency will move towards the achievement of its Vision and Mission statements.

2.4 Staff Resources

Our Chief Executive, who also occupies the statutory post of Commissioner of Valuation (CEO/COV), is responsible to the Minister for the effective operation of the Agency, the fulfilment of its statutory functions and providing Valuation Services to the public sector. The Chief Executive is assisted by a Management Board – which comprises the CEO/COV, 2 Assistant Commissioners, 6 District Valuers and Head of Corporate Services. This group has overall responsibility for delivering our business.

At the commencement date of this Business Plan, some 321 staff work in the Agency, 176 of whom are in the Professional and Technical discipline.

We deliver our services from a network of 7 District Offices across Northern Ireland. The public have access to all of these offices (see Annex B).

2.5 Financial Resources

The Agency has been allocated £13.19m in respect of Departmental Running Costs in 2005-06, of which £1.4m is to be earned through receipts.

3. MAJOR PROJECTS

3.1 Domestic Revaluation

The Agency's objective is to complete a Revaluation of all 700,000+ domestic properties in Northern Ireland by April 2006. In this year a number of challenging milestone targets, detailed in the Balanced Scorecard, have been set that will facilitate the achievement of this overall objective.

3.2 Public Interface Project

The Public Interface Project is designed to provide a citizen centric strategy that will enable ratepayers to access VLA for resolution of any enquiries they may have following publication of the draft valuation list in April 2006. It aims to provide the public with open and transparent access to policy and evidence relevant to their revaluation assessment.

3.3 VLA / RCA Unification

Modernisation of public services is a key Departmental objective, which puts the citizen first and aims to transform the face of public services through joined-up working and the delivery of seamless, quality services.

A detailed review of the rating service was carried out in late 2004-05, considering how this should be improved and modernised to meet the increasingly sophisticated expectations of ratepayers and other stakeholders. This review also built on the outcomes and recommendations of the individual reviews of both the VLA and RCA. In February 2005 the Department announced that the two Agencies would merge to create a single Valuation and Rating Agency.

Delivery of this change, which will enable improvements in efficiency, accessibility and customer service, will be a major challenge in 2005-06 for both Agencies.

4. TARGETS

4.1 Ministerial Targets

Ian Pearson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Northern Ireland Office has approved the following targets for VLA in 2005-06:

Rating Reform

- **Domestic Revaluation**

To have generated initial capital value estimates for all properties by 31 October 2005.

By 30 January 2006 to have verified and signed-off all valuations to ensure that a New List is ready for publication by 31 March 2006.

- **Public Interface Project**

By 1 March 2006 to have in place all facilities needed for public interaction relating to the new capital value assessments – notifications, call centres, website, interview and further access arrangements, etc.

Finance

- To demonstrate the ability to achieve full-cost recovery in respect of client services.

Merger of VLA and RCA

- By 31 March 2007 to ensure the successful unification of VLA and RCA.

BUSINESS PLAN 2005-06: CORPORATE INDICATORS FOR MONITORING PURPOSES
BALANCED SCORECARD: 1. DELIVERABLES

MB --/--

No.	Area	Actions	Lead Person (Division)	Performance Indicators (MT) = Ministerial, (CE) = Chief Executive Targets. (M) = Monthly Report.	Information Available On (Date)	Position @	RAG Status
1.1	Domestic Revaluation – Delivery of Valuations.	Produce new Domestic List on Market Value basis accurately and on time.	Paul McGuckin (Domestic Revaluation)	(MT) To have generated the initial capital- value estimates for all properties by 31 October 2005.			
				(MT) By 30 January 2006 to have verified and signed-off all valuations to ensure that a New List is ready for publication by 31 March 2006.			
1.2	Dealing effectively with Applications.	Monitor activity.	Alan Hanna (Rating)	Report on A3CNs and A3CDs outstanding	Prior to OMG (2 nd Wed of month)		
1.3	Dealing effectively with Appeals.	Ensure timely action to agreed standards.	Henry Spence (C&P Services)	“Turnaround of 12 weeks average” (M).	14 th		
1.4	Non-Domestic Revaluation 2009.	Rolling forward the 2009 Revaluation, through a Project Plan.	Henry Spence (Non-Domestic Rating / C&P Services)	To produce project initiation document and outline Business Case for Non-Domestic Reval no later than end of December 2005.			

BUSINESS PLAN 2005-06: CORPORATE INDICATORS FOR MONITORING PURPOSES
BALANCED SCORECARD: 1. DELIVERABLES

MB --/--

No.	Area	Actions	Lead Person (Division)	Performance Indicators (MT) = Ministerial, (CE) = Chief Executive Targets. (M) = Monthly Report.	Information Available On (Date)	Position @	RAG Status
1.5	Client Satisfaction.	To deliver a valuation and advice service to the public sector which achieves high levels of satisfaction with all stakeholders.	Alan Hazlett (Client Services)	(CE) Maintain CPI for clients in work programme at 2004-05 outturn of 74.5.			
				Research and establish internal timeliness targets for all areas of work and develop related WiP benchmarks to monitor District pressures.			
1.6	Average Days for Key Rating Cases. (Timeliness)	Ongoing performance management	Alan Hanna (Rating)	(CE) Average Days New Domestic 90 days Non Domestic Alterations 120 days New Non Domestic 90 days Non Domestic Applications 150 days	Prior to OMG		
1.7	Rating Cases completed and outstanding	Ongoing performance management	Alan Hanna (Rating)	Monthly report	Prior to OMG		
1.8	Value new/altered properties <u>accurately</u> and on time. (Valuation Standards)	Monitor List Leakage.	Alan Hanna (Rating)	(CE) Monitor list leakage for A3CN cases on a cumulative basis from 1 April 03 (excluding deletions).			

BUSINESS PLAN 2005-06: CORPORATE INDICATORS FOR MONITORING PURPOSES
BALANCED SCORECARD: 2. IMPROVEMENT/CAPACITY BUILDING

MB --/--

No.	Area	Actions	Lead Person (Division)	Performance Indicators (MT) = Ministerial, (CE) = Chief Executive Targets. (M) = Monthly Report.	Information Available On (Date)	Position @	RAG Status
2.1	Core System Replacement (CSR).	Develop and implement in line with revised plan to achieve "go live" in June 2005 and further releases by Nov 2005.	Alan Bronte, Gerry O'Boyle (C&P Services)	(CE) AODR "go live" 1 April 2005.			
				(CE) System passes Acceptance Testing by 30 May 2005.			
				(CE) Phase I Sign off and "go live" (including Contingency) by 24 June 2005.			
				(CE) Release Shell with Phase II Developments for VLA Test by 29 July 2005.			
				(CE) Phase II Sign off and "go live" (including Contingency) by 18 November 2005.			
2.2	Rating Database.	Identify fitness of current rating database for Non-Domestic Revaluation and make improvements.	Henry Spence (Rating)	Complete an audit report for Non-Domestic and issue data standards by December 2005.			
2.3	Improvement Projects.	Take forward Improvement Projects with RCA/BCNI.	Henry Spence (Rating)	To take forward a review of the BCNI Project, including experience gained from wider Belfast Pilot, by 31 March 2006.			
			John Blacker (Rating)	To report progress, each quarter, on BCNI Project.	15 th		
2.4	Rating Reform.	Respond/liaise with RPD on matters of policy and legislation.	Henry Spence (Rating)	VLA input to contribute to bringing forward reforms on target. Update to Management Board.			

BUSINESS PLAN 2005-06: CORPORATE INDICATORS FOR MONITORING PURPOSES
BALANCED SCORECARD: 2. IMPROVEMENT/CAPACITY BUILDING (continued)

MB --/--

No.	Area	Actions	Lead Person (Division)	Performance Indicators (MT) = Ministerial, (CE) = Chief Executive Targets. (M) = Monthly Report.	Information Available On (Date)	Position @	RAG Status
2.5	Developing and Training Strategy.	To develop D&T Strategy based on the outcomes of HR Skills Audit.	Dennis Stanfield (C&P Services)	Complete HR Strategy and Implementation Plan by 30 June 2005 30 September 2005.			
2.6	Public Interface Project (PIP).	Secure notifications, call-centre, website, interview and further access arrangements.	David McCurry, Stephen Fay (C&P Services)	(MT) By 1 March 2006 to have in place all facilities needed for public interaction relating to the new capital-value assessments – notifications, call-centre, website, interview and further access arrangements.			
				(CE) Business Case approved by 1 July 2005.			
				(CE) Procurement achieved by 1 December 2005.			
2.7	VLA/RCA Unification.	To ensure the successful unification of VLA and RCA.	Nigel Woods	(MT) By 31 March 2007 to ensure the successful unification of VLA and RCA.			
				(CE) By 1 June 2005 to have project management structure in place and PiD approval and proven, at best, resource neutral.			

BUSINESS PLAN 2005-06: CORPORATE INDICATORS FOR MONITORING PURPOSES
BALANCED SCORECARD: 3. PROCESSES

MB --/--

No.	Area	Actions	Lead Person (Division)	Performance Indicators (MT) = Ministerial, (CE) = Chief Executive Targets. (M) = Monthly Report.	Information Available On (Date)	Position @	RAG Status
3.1	Client SLAs.	Review and agree Service Levels and standards for client work.	Alan Hazlett (Client Services)	All SLAs for notional clients to be reviewed by December 2005 in line with Departmental Charging Review Plan (M).	N/A		
				All SLAs for hard-charged clients to be reviewed by December 2005 (M).	N/A		
3.2	Client Management.	Ensure that client work is managed against planned resource allocation.	Alan Hazlett (Client Services),	Internal budgets allocated to clients by 31 May 2005.	N/A		
			Dennis Stanfield (C&P Services)	Monitoring arrangements in place by CSR "go live" plus 4 months.	N/A		
3.3	Freedom of Information (Fol).	To ensure that VLA complies with DFP's Information Strategy and the Fol Act.	Dennis Stanfield (C&P Services)	Ensure the Agency answers Fol requests within the 20-day deadline (M).	N/A		
3.4	Corporate Governance.	Ensure the proper operation of Corporate Governance throughout the Agency.	Dennis Stanfield (C&P Services)	(CE) Satisfactory Internal Audit report to the Audit Risk Committee on 6 monthly basis. Stewardship Statements to be completed on time.			

BUSINESS PLAN 2005-06: CORPORATE INDICATORS FOR MONITORING PURPOSES
BALANCED SCORECARD: 4. RESOURCES

MB --/--

No.	Area	Actions	Lead Person (Division)	Performance Indicators (MT) = Ministerial, (CE) = Chief Executive Targets. (M) = Monthly Report.	Information Available On (Date)	Position @	RAG Status
4.1	Expenditure.	Ongoing financial management.	Dennis Stanfield (C&P Services)	(CE) Maintain expenditure within Limits and Plans (M).			
				Finance update to Management Board (M).			
4.2	Full-Cost Recovery.	Ongoing management and review to ensure full-cost recovery.	Alan Hazlett (Client Services), Dennis Stanfield (C&P Services)	(MT) "To demonstrate the ability to achieve full-cost recovery in respect of Client Services".	N/A		
4.3	Receipts.	Manage Client Services work to achieve receipts target.	Alan Hazlett (Client Services), Dennis Stanfield (C&P Services)	Monthly update to Management Board (M).			
4.4	Rating Unit Cost.	Ongoing management to ensure cost effective completion of rating casework.	Alan Hanna (Rating)	(CE) "Achieve Rating Unit Cost Target".			
			Dennis Stanfield (C&P Services)	Monthly update to MB and quarterly review (M).			
4.5	Resource agreed Work Programme.	Ongoing close working between Operations and C&P Services to provide proper resources to meet agreed business needs.	Dennis Stanfield (C&P Services)	Report on exceptional deviation from plans.			

ANNEX B

DISTRICT OFFICE	DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA	ADDRESS TELEPHONE AND FAX NUMBERS
Ballymena	Ballymena, Ballymoney Carrickfergus, Larne Moyle, Newtownabbey	Government Offices, 12-14 George Street, Ballymena BT43 5AP Tel: 028 2566 0700 Fax: 028 2566 0711 Email: Ballymena.VLA@dfpni.gov.uk
Bangor	Ards, Castlereagh North Down	Crown Buildings, Hamilton Road, Bangor BT20 4LQ Tel: 028 9127 9111 Fax: 028 9147 1644 Email: Bangor.VLA@dfpni.gov.uk
Belfast	Belfast	Queen's Court, 56-66 Upper Queen Street, Belfast BT1 6FD Tel: 028 9025 0700 Fax: 028 9054 3930 Email: Belfast.VLA@dfpni.gov.uk
Craigavon	Armagh, Craigavon Newry & Mourne	Marlborough House, Central Way, Craigavon BT64 1AD Tel: 028 3834 1144 Fax: 028 3832 0177 Email: Craigavon.VLA@dfpni.gov.uk
Lisburn	Antrim, Banbridge Down, Lisburn	1 The Sidings, Antrim Road, Lisburn BT28 3AJ Tel: 028 9262 3500 Fax: 028 9262 3555 Email: Lisburn.VLA@dfpni.gov.uk
Londonderry	Coleraine, Derry, Limavady Magherafelt, Strabane	Waterside House, 75 Duke Street, Londonderry BT47 6FP Tel: 028 7131 9000 Fax: 028 7131 9087 Email: Londonderry.VLA@dfpni.gov.uk
Omagh	Cookstown, Dungannon Fermanagh, Omagh	Boaz House, 19 Scarffe's Entry, Omagh BT78 1JG Tel: 028 8225 4888 Fax: 028 8225 4880 Email: Omagh.VLA@dfpni.gov.uk
Central Advisory Unit		Queen's Court, 56-66 Upper Queen Street, Belfast BT1 6FD Tel: 028 9054 3774 Fax: 028 9054 3770 Email: CAU.VLA@dfpni.gov.uk