

1. INTRODUCTION

The Valuation and Lands Agency (VLA) is committed to providing the highest standards of service to all its customers. Details of the standards you can expect are set out in the VLA Charter, available from any of our offices. Our aim is to get things right first time. However, if you are not entirely satisfied with any aspect of our service, please let us know and we will do our best to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

2. WHAT YOU CAN COMPLAIN ABOUT

You can make a complaint about the standard of service you have received in relation to:

- our provision of valuation certificates/extracts; and
- VLA's handling of any other valuations, appraisals or advice to public bodies which affect you.

A separate formal appeals procedure may apply if you disagree with a rating valuation. Advice on how to appeal is included in the notification of the decision and full details are outlined in VLA's Charter which is available on request from any of our District Offices.

3. HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

Informal Procedure

The Agency believes that most complaints can be settled quickly and satisfactorily if you telephone or meet the person who has been dealing with the case. Our staff will always give their name over the phone and when writing. If, after initial contact with our staff you remain dissatisfied, you should ask to speak to or write to the District Complaints Officer. He or she will help you make a formal complaint.

Formal Procedures – Part A

You can write to the District Valuer in the office concerned, setting out in full, details of the complaint. The District Valuer will fully investigate and reply within 10 working days of receiving your letter. If a full reply cannot be given within this time, you will be informed of progress and told when you can expect a full response. *See Page 4 for the address of each District Valuer.*

Formal Procedures – Part B

If you are not satisfied with the District Valuer's reply, you may write to:

Mr Nigel Woods
Chief Executive and Commissioner of Valuation
Valuation and Lands Agency
Queen's Court
56-66 Upper Queen Street
Belfast BT1 6FD

The same response times as in Part A will apply.

You can also contact us by e-mail at: email.vla@dfpni.gov.ni

What you can expect

Your complaint will:

- be acknowledged immediately and investigated thoroughly;
- be treated in a confidential manner; and
- not affect your continuing right to fair and equitable treatment by the Agency.

Our reply will:

- fully explain the outcome of our investigations;
- apologise where we have made a mistake; and
- let you know what we have done to put things right.

Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

Our complaints procedure is not a substitute for your right to complain to the Assembly Ombudsman. However, the Ombudsman will generally expect you to have used the Agency's complaints procedure before accepting your complaint. A written complaint to the Ombudsman must be sent through a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) (who does not have to be your local Member). The Ombudsman's office may be contacted by phone, by letter or in person.

By phone: Freephone 0800 343424

By letter: The Ombudsman
Freepost
Belfast
BT1 6BR

In person: The Ombudsman's Office
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

By fax: (028) 9023 4912

4. **COMPLAINTS OR QUERIES ABOUT RELATED SERVICES**

This leaflet covers all our areas of responsibility, but you may have concerns about related services. If your query refers to any of the following, you should contact the appropriate body directly.

Amount of the district rate: This is the responsibility of each District Council. See phone book for your local District Council address.

Amount of the regional rate: This is the responsibility of the Department of Finance and Personnel. Its address is:

Department of Finance and Personnel
Rating Policy Branch
Rathgael House
Balloo Annex
BANGOR BT19 7NA

Tel: (028) 91858091

Collection and recovery of rates* This is the responsibility of the Rate Collection Agency. See phone book for local office address (under "Government of Northern Ireland").

Housing Benefit Law*: This is the responsibility of the Department for Social Development. Its address is:

Department for Social Development
Social Security Policy and Legislation Division
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3SQ

Tel: (028) 9052 2305

- * Housing Benefit is a social security benefit to help you to pay your rent and/or rates if you are on low income.

Housing Benefit for tenants is administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and for owner occupiers by the Rate Collection Agency (RCA).

District Office	Belfast Council Area	District Valuer	Address	Tel/Fax No
Ballymena	Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Larne, Moyle, Newtownabbey	Alan Hazlett	Government Offices George Street BALLYMENA BT43 5AP	Phone/Fax: (028) 25660713/ (028) 25660711
Londonderry	Coleraine, Derry, Limavady, Magherafelt, Strabane	Alan Hazlett	Waterside House 75 Duke Street LONDONDERRY BT47 1FP	Phone/Fax: (028) 71319056/ (028) 71319087
Bangor	Ards, Castlereagh, North Down	Alan Brontë	Crown Buildings Hamilton Road BANGOR BT20 4LQ	Phone/Fax: (028) 91279049/ (028) 91471644
Lisburn	Antrim, Banbridge, Down, Lisburn	Alan Brontë	1 The Sidings Antrim Road LISBURN BT28 3AJ	Phone/Fax: (028) 92623531/ (028) 92623555
Belfast - Client Services	Belfast	Denis Annett	Queen's Court 56-66 Upper Queen Street BELFAST BT1 6FD	Phone/Fax: (028) 90543926/ (028) 90543930
Belfast - Rating	Belfast	Alan Brontë	Queen's Court 56-66 Upper Queen Street BELFAST BT1 6FD	Phone/Fax: (028) 90543922/ (028) 90543930
Craigavon	Armagh, Craigavon, Newry & Mourne	Alan Hanna	Marlborough House Central Way CRAIGAVON BT64 1AD	Phone/Fax: (028) 38320167/ (028) 38320177
Omagh	Cookstown, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Omagh	Alan Hanna	Boaz House 15 Scarffe's Entry OMAGH BT78 1JG	Phone/Fax: (028) 82254737 (028) 82254880