



**Annual Report
2021/22**

**Scottish
Assessors
Association**

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Foreword

by Gary Bennett BSc MSc AEA (Cert-Scotland) MRICS IRRV (Hons),
SAA President

The Scottish Assessors Association (SAA) is a voluntary body which draws together all Assessors and Electoral Registration Officers across Scotland. Its core purpose is to share knowledge and encourage partnership working in the fields of valuation for non-domestic rating, council tax and electoral registration.

The Association was instituted in 1975 at the time of local government reorganisation and is the successor body to the Association of Lands Valuation Assessors of Scotland (1957) and earlier bodies extending back to The Association of Lands Valuation Assessors (1886). The SAA continued in being after the 1996 reorganisation of Scottish local government and operates in terms of a formal constitution.

SAA members are responsible for the valuation for rating of circa 260,000 non-domestic properties, and the allocation of council tax bands to some 2.68 million dwellings. This has enabled the collection of circa £2B in non-domestic rates, and circa £2.75B in council tax. In addition, our rateable values and council tax bands are used as the basis to raise around £1.1B in water, sewerage and drainage revenues. As Electoral Registration Officers we are responsible for the compilation of electoral registers that enable over 4 million citizens to participate in elections ranging from local community councils to national parliamentary elections and referenda. Our statutory tasks of maintaining the valuation rolls of non-domestic properties, and the valuation lists of dwellings and electoral registers have continued to be undertaken throughout the period 2021/22, notwithstanding the difficulties which the pandemic continues to present. The collaborative working of all Assessors and

EROs, through the SAA, has contributed significantly to the delivery of statutory functions through the pandemic.

Over the last year, Assessors have continued to deal with both non-domestic and council tax appeals with those appeals which are unable to be resolved being heard by valuation appeal committees, whether in person, or via virtually held hearings. The exception to this is the voluminous numbers of non-domestic appeals lodged in relation to the pandemic which are effectively paused awaiting the outcome of proposed legislation relating to such appeals.

The SAA continued throughout 2021/22 to work with stakeholders in implementing the Scottish Government's non-domestic rates reforms, liaising with the Scottish Government, as well as meeting with the Scottish Ratepayers Forum, the Scottish Ratepayers Surveyors Forum, and the Scottish Business Ratepayers Group. Minutes of formal meetings are accessible at the SAA Portal (saa.gov.uk).

Additionally, the SAA are represented, through the SAA Executive, on the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service (SCTS) Stakeholders Group, formed to help facilitate the transfer of the functions of Local Valuation Appeal Panels to the SCTS. The group has met several times over the period 2021/22 with a view to developing processes for the transfer of functions for the implementation date of the new appeals set up scheduled for 1/1/2023.

In respect of electoral registration, all work associated with the Scottish Parliamentary election in May 2021 was undertaken.

The annual canvass of electors, with the resumption of household visits where required, was also undertaken successfully. Reform continues in respect of electoral registration and we continue to work closely at both a UK and Scottish level with all interested parties to make the electoral registration system more efficient and effective. The SAA has also been actively considering the implications of the forthcoming Elections Act which will result in additional duties for electoral registration officers and their staff.

The pandemic has changed the way many organisations now operate; Assessor & ERO offices across Scotland have embarked on a variety of business process re-engineering projects to ensure that statutory duties continue to be undertaken, whilst ensuring that the level of service delivered to service users has not been materially affected due to the unprecedented circumstances. Throughout the period 2021/22, the SAA through collaborative working with Assessors and EROs have shared knowledge and experience of working throughout the pandemic with the overarching aim of continuing to strive to maintain service delivery across the country, promoting consistency of service provided where possible.

In that regard, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues on the SAA Executive, and other Assessors, and indeed all members of the SAA who should be commended on their agility and willingness to both accommodate and seek to implement a raft of workplace changes throughout all offices across Scotland as a result of the pandemic, with the overarching objective of undertaking all duties where possible.

Outline

This report outlines the function and role of the Scottish Assessors Association, along with a more detailed note of the functions and work undertaken by Assessors and Electoral Registration Officers that make up the membership of the SAA.

This is followed by an overview of our activities and reflection on the period 2021/22 in terms of our undertakings, engagement with stakeholders, and our contribution to the fiscal and democratic framework across Scotland.



Function and role of the SAA

The SAA is a voluntary non-statutory body, independent of local and central government. The SAA's function is to share knowledge and encourage partnership working to enable its members to deliver effective and consistent services.

The SAA serves as a representative and co-ordinating body for the 14 Assessors that provide property value assessments for non-domestic rates (NDR) and council tax across the 32 local authorities in Scotland. It also represents, through its Electoral Registration Committee, the 15 Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) that compile the electoral registers that are used for all elections that take place in Scotland. Essentially, the SAA presents a national outlook and approach for the delivery of local valuation and electoral registration services.

Although a voluntary organisation, all Assessors and their senior staff are members of the Association. One of the principal

functions of the Association is to facilitate a consistency of approach in the administration of the valuation, council tax and electoral registration services. The decisions of the Association have a bearing on how individual Assessors carry out their statutory duties, but each Assessor is an independent official.

The work of the SAA is extensive and varied. It impacts on every household in Scotland through Council Tax and Electoral Registration, and on businesses, public bodies and voluntary organisations through non-domestic rating. The SAA provides a good working example of joint service delivery in practice across Scotland and continues to strive to achieve consistency and good practice in the delivery of services.

As the work which the SAA undertakes affects businesses and citizens across Scotland, partnership working is a key

feature in how the SAA operates and as such our organisation works with a range of stakeholders including; both local and national governments; professional bodies such as the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS); the Institute of Revenue Rating and Valuation (IRRV) the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA); the Electoral Commission and Electoral Management Board for Scotland; the Scottish Ratepayers' Forum, the Scottish Rating Surveyors' Forum; the Scottish Business Rating Group; and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). The SAA also liaises with valuation authorities that operate across the UK and Ireland, namely the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) in England and Wales, the Northern Ireland Lands & Property Services, and the Valuation Office, Ireland with a view to promoting harmonisation in the valuation approaches to properties where deemed appropriate to do so.



Duties of an Assessor

Duties of an Assessor under the Lands Valuation Acts

The duty of Assessors is to make up a Valuation Roll for their respective valuation area in each year of a revaluation. Assessors are also required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to compile and maintain a Valuation List for each of their respective councils. These lists must show each dwelling which is in the council area and the valuation band applicable to it.

Valuation Roll

The Valuation Roll is a public document which contains an entry for all non-domestic properties in an Assessor's area except those specifically excluded by law (see Appendix 1). Each entry in the Roll includes the names of the proprietor, tenant and occupier as appropriate, the Net Annual Value which has been set by the Assessor, and the Rateable Value. The Rateable Value is derived from the Net Annual Value and as legislation currently stands, for the majority of properties, Rateable Value and Net Annual Value are the same. The Valuation Roll entry for any property in Scotland can be checked by using the search facility on the SAA's portal website www.saa.gov.uk. Specific valuation details are also available on this site for a range of properties.

Values are established at a Revaluation which, in Scotland, are legislated (Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020) to occur every three years commencing on 1 April 2023. A Revaluation results in the production of a new Valuation Roll which contains revised values for all non-domestic properties in an Assessor's area.

New properties are added to the Roll as they become capable of beneficial occupation and entries for demolished buildings are deleted. An Assessor is required to notify relevant proprietors,

tenants and occupiers of changes which are made to the Valuation Roll by issuing a Valuation Notice. All of these interested parties have a right to appeal the valuation set by an Assessor to an independent local valuation appeal committee.

Valuation Appeal Committees

Most appeals are settled between Assessors' staff and the ratepayer or appointed agent. However, if a settlement cannot be achieved the appeal is heard by an independent Valuation Appeal Committee. Members are drawn from an Appeal Panel appointed by the Sheriff Principal and are independent of the Assessor, local council, or Valuation Joint Board. Committees are assisted by a Secretary, usually a qualified solicitor (also appointed by the Sheriff) who provides advice on the law and procedure, but who takes no part in the decision making process. Members of the Panel are usually unqualified in valuation or legal matters but are appointed because they are local ratepayers or council tax payers. The proceedings are relatively formal, and witnesses can be called and placed on oath by the Committee Chairman. A Committee usually comprises between 3 and 8 members. Sometimes an Assessor will conduct their own case, or be represented by a member of staff, and at other times they will be represented by an Advocate or Counsel. Ratepayers (and Council Tax payers) are entitled to appear in person to present their own case or can be legally represented. A surveyor, family member or friend can also appear on behalf of the appellant.

The Chairman is responsible for the conduct of the hearing and will give advice and guidance as to the procedure to be followed at any time during the hearing.

This committee system is due to be replaced on 1 January 2023 by a new

appeal system under the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS).

Lands Tribunal for Scotland

In general terms, where a valuation appeal is particularly complex or may set a precedent an Assessor or ratepayer can ask to have the appeal heard by the Lands Tribunal for Scotland. In such cases the Assessor will usually be represented by an Advocate or Counsel. The Lands Tribunal for Scotland is an independent civil court. It has statutory power to deal with various types of dispute involving land or property including matters of dispute in valuations for rating on non-domestic properties. The circumstances and manner in which reference of an appeal against an entry in the valuation roll may be made to the Lands Tribunal is a matter for regulations made by the Secretary of State. An application for referral to the Lands Tribunal must be made to the Valuation Appeal Committee and include representations in relation to the following matters which provide the grounds on which a referral request may be made, namely that:

- (a) The facts of the case are complex or highly technical;
- (b) The evidence to be given by expert opinion is complex or highly technical;
- (c) The law applicable to the case is uncertain or difficult to apply;
- (d) The law applicable to the case raises a fundamental or general issue likely to be used as a precedent in other cases;
- (e) The subjects relate to more than one valuation area and the valuation is appealed in more than one such area.

Appeals heard by the Lands Tribunal for Scotland are due to be dealt with under the new set up within the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) with effect from 1 January 2023.

Continued

Lands Valuation Appeal Court

A decision of the Valuation Appeal Committee or the Lands Tribunal for Scotland can be appealed to the Lands Valuation Appeal Court. Such an appeal takes the form of a stated case. The case is to be stated to the judges of the Lands Valuation Appeal Court, which is a civil court in Scotland composed of 3 Court of Session judges. The procedure involves Assessors' staff preparing transcripts, making representations and observations on draft stated cases, and liaising with Counsel on grounds/answers to grounds of appeal in preparation for the case being heard at the Court of Session in Edinburgh.

Council Tax

An Assessor is responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the Valuation (Council Tax) List, which places each domestic property ("dwelling") in one of eight valuation bands (Bands A – H).

The Valuation (Council Tax) List

The Valuation (Council Tax) List is a public document and contains the addresses and Council Tax bands of all domestic properties ("dwellings") in the valuation area. Valuation Lists can be inspected at

Assessors' offices (details of which can be found at the Scottish Assessors' portal website www.saa.gov.uk) and can also be checked by using the search facility on the portal.

Dwellings

In general terms any kind of house or flat will be determined as a dwelling if it used as such, including second homes. Caravans count as dwellings if they are someone's main home. Certain properties in multiple occupation, where facilities are shared, may count as one or more dwellings depending on the detailed occupation arrangements.

The band reflects the Assessor's opinion of the property's open market value as at 1 April 1991, but taking account of its physical state and its locality as at 1 April 1993 (for new dwellings the date of valuation is still 1 April 1991 but taking account of the current physical state and location of the property) and subject to a number of important statutory assumptions. Assessors base their opinion of value on the actual selling prices of similar properties which sold around the valuation date of 1 April 1991.

Prior to the introduction of Council Tax (and before the Community Charge (Poll Tax)) Assessors were responsible for domestic

property rating and maintained databases of information about houses in their areas. This information included details of accommodation, floor areas, outbuildings, improvements etc. as well as actual selling prices recorded in the Register of Sasines (Land Register).

An Assessor is not required to place an actual value on each dwelling but has to demonstrate that its likely sale price would have been within the range of values in the relevant band. Due to the range of values in each band, properties which are not identical in terms of accommodation or size can still be in the same band. Therefore, a two or three bedroomed flat can quite readily be in the same Band as a semi-detached or terraced house.

Many houses will also have been extended and/or modernised since 1993 when Council Tax was introduced. These changes will not necessarily be reflected in their current banding since there are restrictions on when a band can be changed. It is possible therefore that bands may appear inconsistent with the current physical circumstances of a group of houses in an area. This is because the bands reflect what the houses were worth in the physical state they were in on 1 April 1993 not how they are today.

Council Tax Valuation Bands

Range of values	Valuation band
Values not exceeding £27,000	A
Values exceeding £27,000 but not exceeding £35,000	B
Values exceeding £35,000 but not exceeding £45,000	C
Values exceeding £45,000 but not exceeding £58,000	D
Values exceeding £58,000 but not exceeding £80,000	E
Values exceeding £80,000 but not exceeding £106,000	F
Values exceeding £106,000 but not exceeding £212,000	G
Values exceeding £212,000	H

Statutory Assumptions Applied to Banding

An Assessor must make a number of statutory assumptions in determining the Council Tax band. These are:

- the sale was with vacant possession
- the dwelling was in a state of reasonable repair (regardless of its actual condition)
- the size and layout of the dwelling and the physical state of the locality were the same as at the time when the valuation of the dwelling was made
- the dwelling was sold free from any heritable security (i.e. any mortgage is assumed to be paid off)
- common parts were in a state of reasonable repair (regardless of their actual condition) and the purchaser would be liable to contribute towards the cost of keeping them in such a state
- use of the dwelling would be permanently restricted to use as a private dwelling; and
- the dwelling had no development value other than that attributable to "permitted development".

There are also special provisions applicable to the Council Tax banding of properties used in connection with agriculture, crofting or fish farming, and properties adapted for people with physical disabilities.

New Houses

As part of the maintenance of the Valuation (Council Tax) List an Assessor will endeavour to add new built houses to the Valuation List as soon as possible after they are completed.

Council Tax Proposals

If you are the owner of the property or the person liable to pay Council Tax for it, you can lodge an appeal (known as a "proposal") to alter the Council Tax band:

- within six months of becoming the owner or the liable person
- within six months of the Assessor altering the band
- within six months of an appeal decision, which is a relevant decision, in respect of a dwelling comparable to yours which gives you reasonable grounds to contend that the band applicable to your dwelling should be changed
- at any time if there has been a "material reduction" (see below) in the value of the dwelling
- at any time if there has been a "material increase" (see below) in the value of the dwelling and it, or any part of it, has subsequently been sold
- at any time if the balance between domestic and business use changes (for example, in hotels or boarding houses)
- at any time to add from a particular date a dwelling not shown on the list
- at any time to delete from a particular date a dwelling shown on the list.

The Assessors' portal has been developed to allow Council Tax payers to lodge a proposal on-line www.saa.gov.uk. A member of Assessors' staff will discuss the proposal/appeal with the tax payer and if it cannot be resolved, it will be referred to the Valuation Appeal Panel to be heard by a Committee. The Committee will hear the appeal within its normal cycle of hearings and will issue formal notification of the date and time of the hearing and details of the appeal procedure.

This committee system is due to be replaced on 1 January 2023 by a new appeal system under the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS).

Material Reduction in Value

The band of a house may be reduced if there has been a material reduction in its value. A material reduction in value may result from the demolition of any part of the dwelling, any change in the physical state of its locality or any adaptation of the dwelling to suit a person who is disabled. A reduction in value caused, for example, by a downturn in the housing market, does not count for this purpose.

Material Increase in Value and Subsequent Sale

The band of a house may be increased if there has been a material increase in its value and it is subsequently sold. A material increase in value may result from, for example, the building of an extension to the property. Any change in the Council Tax band following on from a material increase in value will only take effect from the date the property is sold. This means that although many properties have had material increases in their value since they were originally banded in 1993, these increases will not be reflected in the band if they have not been subsequently sold.

Correction of Errors

Where an Assessor is satisfied that the band of a house is not the band which should have been set then they may amend the Valuation (Council Tax) List to correct that error. This can lead to a band being increased or decreased depending on the circumstances. A reduction in band would be corrected effective from 1 April 1993 or from the date the dwelling entered the list, whichever is later. Any increase in banding as a result of the correction of an error may however be charged by the billing authority from the 1st of the month following the correction.

Membership of the SAA

All 14 Assessors appointed by their respective local valuation authorities are members of the SAA, along with their senior staff.

Four Assessors are appointed by single valuation authorities (Dumfries & Galloway, Fife, Glasgow and Scottish Borders) with the remaining ten appointed by valuation joint boards that comprise between two and four adjacent local authorities. Since 1856 Assessors have fulfilled the role of Electoral Registration Officers (EROs). Currently the EROs for Fife and Dundee are not the local Assessor. Full partnership working across Scotland is however enabled as all EROs are members of the SAA committee dedicated to electoral registration.

Assessors and EROs rely on local government for their funding and support but remain completely independent officials in respect of the delivery of their statutory duties, namely: the compilation and maintenance of the valuation roll for non-domestic rating purposes; the allocation of dwellings to council tax bands contained in the valuation list; and the maintenance of the electoral registers containing the names of persons who are entitled to vote in elections.

Assessors provide Electoral Registration services in all Council areas except Dundee and Fife. As at 31 March 2022, the ERO for Dundee City Council is Roger Mennie. The ERO for Fife Council is Lindsay Thomson.

ASSESSOR (as at 31 March 2022)	AUTHORITY	COUNCIL AREAS
Helen McPhee	Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board	East Ayrshire North Ayrshire South Ayrshire
Pete Wildman	Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board	Clackmannanshire Falkirk Stirling
James Doig	Dumfries & Galloway	Dumfries & Galloway
David C Thomson	Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board	Argyll & Bute East Dunbartonshire West Dunbartonshire
Heather Honeyman	Fife	Fife
William McFarlane	Glasgow City	Glasgow
Mark Adam	Grampian Valuation Joint Board	Aberdeen Aberdeenshire Moray
William Gillies	Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board	Eilean Siar Highland
Gary Bennett	Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board	North Lanarkshire South Lanarkshire
Gary Elliot	Lothian Valuation Joint Board	East Lothian Edinburgh Midlothian West Lothian
Dennis M Stevenson	Orkney & Shetland Valuation Joint Board	Orkney Islands Shetland Islands
Robert Nicol	Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board	East Renfrewshire Inverclyde Renfrewshire
Brian Rout	Scottish Borders	Scottish Borders
Alastair Kirkwood	Tayside Valuation Joint Board	Angus Dundee Perth & Kinross

Governance and structure of the SAA

2021/22 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT:
Gary Bennett

VICE PRESIDENT:
Pete Wildman

SECRETARY:
Heather Honeyman

PAST PRESIDENT:
Alastair Kirkwood

The SAA has a formal constitution and meets on a regular basis.

Office holders are elected in terms of the constitution and generally hold office for a period of two years.

The SAA is represented by an Executive Committee comprising the President, Vice President, Secretary and Past President. Throughout the period 2021/22, those positions were held by Gary Bennett, Pete Wildman, Heather Honeyman and Alastair Kirkwood.

The SAA works through the voluntary sharing of expertise and resources held by the individual Assessors and EROs. Individual members of the SAA are employed by their corresponding public authorities, and subject to the governance audit and regulatory regimes of those authorities. The SAA is not a national public authority and only holds nominal funds that are provided by means of a personal subscription received by members.

The SAA has standing subject-specific property valuation committees that meet as required to provide recommendations and solutions to the challenges that lie within each subject area. Each committee is chaired by an Assessor member of the SAA. In addition to the property valuation committees, the SAA also has an Electoral Registration committee; a Governance committee that deals with issues such as data protection, freedom of information and records management; a Basic Principles committee which considers matters such as the development of Practice Notes on fundamental valuation principles; and a Portal Management committee that covers the development and maintenance of the jointly operated SAA website.

The SAA publish an extensive number of valuation practice notes, together with specific valuation details for a range of property types, which are available at www.saa.gov.uk

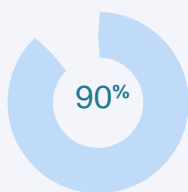


SAA online

www.saa.gov.uk

2.95M

ADDRESSES FOR LOOK-UP



ACCESS MAPPABLE
VALUATION ROLL SUBJECT

154,000

NON-DOMESTIC PROPERTY
VALUATION DETAILS AVAILABLE

The SAA has pioneered online shared services in the public sector with its award-winning website www.saa.gov.uk

This website provides a look-up service for the council tax band or rateable value for the 2.95M addresses in Scotland.

For the 260,000 non-domestic properties the appeal status is also provided and for over 154,000 of these non-domestic properties the valuation details are available online too.

The website also provides information on current valuation and electoral matters and useful links to enable citizens to register to vote, contact their local assessor and ERO, look up appeal decisions and access information on rates and reliefs published by the Scottish Government.

During 2021/22 assessors have continued to collectively invest in updating and improving the functionality of both the public open access site and restricted access shared work area.

A GIS mapping interface has been firmly embedded within the SAA website allowing users to spatially view and

access some 90% of all mappable Valuation Roll subjects.

Further improvements have been made to the user journey and functionality for the online submission of information by ratepayers in respect of shooting rights.

The website can now display detailed valuations for properties, such as public buildings, self-catering units, carparks and shooting rights, in addition to those for shops, offices and industrial subjects that are currently available. This development brings a further 53,000 valuations within scope in addition to the 154,000 that are already displayed and will be rolled out progressively during 2022. For the majority of properties valued using the comparative method of valuation, the website will display the list of rented properties which informed the rate/m² used in the valuation. This development will be in place for the draft 2023 valuations that will be available from 30 November 2022. The above developments have been made to improve information provision by the Scottish Assessors as part of the Scottish Government's non domestic rates reforms.

2021/22

Non-domestic property assessment

With the exception of properties that are exempt (see Appendix 1), all non-domestic properties have a rateable value that broadly equates to the rental value of the property, fixed according to certain statutory requirements. These rateable values are published in documents known as valuation rolls that are provided to each local council. Through the SAA website – www.saa.gov.uk - these local valuation rolls are all made readily accessible to the public at a single location.

As at 31 March 2022 there were 261,161 entries for non-domestic properties in the valuation rolls in Scotland, with a corresponding total rateable value of £7.296B. Appendix 2 provides the distribution of rateable value across the different property sectors as at 1 April 2021 and again at 31 March 2022.

The purpose of the rateable values shown in the valuation roll is to distribute the overall burden of some £2.9B of non-domestic rates taxation across the various sectors and occupiers of non-domestic properties in Scotland.

The rateable values shown in the valuation roll are refreshed periodically during a general revaluation. The last general revaluation took place in 2017, with the next revaluation scheduled to take place in 2023, with the new valuation roll coming into force on 1 April 2023. Throughout the

2021/22 year work has continued to resolve as many outstanding revaluation appeals as possible, in order to bring certainty of rates liabilities to as many stakeholders as possible, including both ratepayers who contribute in terms of the NDR tax burden, and local government which relies upon NDR income to fund provision of valuable public services.

Some 73,891 properties had revaluation appeals lodged against the assessed rateable value following the 2017 non-domestic revaluation. As at 31 March 2022, a total of 71,774 appeals against the 2017 Revaluation - with an original RV of £4,980m - had been resolved, representing circa 97% of the total appealed properties and 92% of the £5,394m appealed RV. A total of 2,126 appeals against the 2017 Revaluation are still outstanding, representing £414m of appealed RV. Just over two thirds of appeals resolved as at 31 March 2022 (48,775) did not result in any change in RV.

In addition to appeals being made against rateable values at a general revaluation, owners and occupiers of non-domestic properties may also appeal any new or amended rateable values, and may also appeal where they think that circumstances have changed that should reduce a rateable value. These appeals are known as running roll appeals rather than revaluation appeals. Over 90,000 such appeals were lodged on the basis of a material change of

circumstances relating to the Covid-19 pandemic over the period 2019/20 & 2021/22, which may present significant challenges to all involved in the non-domestic appeals process going forward. As at 31 March 2022, final legislative plans were awaited from the Scottish Government in respect of appeals lodged on the grounds of the pandemic.

Apart from facilitating the resolution and disposal of revaluation appeals, Assessors continued to be active in keeping their valuation rolls up to date to ensure that demolitions, extensions, other alterations to properties and new properties are given an accurate rateable value. This has resulted in 15,551 alterations to valuation rolls for the period 2021/22.



The SAA and NDR reform

With the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act receiving Royal Assent in March 2020, progress continues within Assessors' offices in regard to the new statutory undertakings as contained within the Act. Many of the new undertakings on Assessors as a result of the Act continue to be co-ordinated via the SAA. The following is a summary of the progress in connection with the principal sections of the Act which affect matters relating to the Valuation Roll:-

Section 2 – (Amends the definition of “year of revaluation” such that, after 2022, revaluations will be carried out every three years, rather than every five years).

Progress update: The Scottish Government took the decision, due to the pandemic, to postpone the next revaluation to 1 April 2023, with the tone date moving to 1 April 2022. Throughout the period 2021/22, the Scottish Assessors Association continued to prepare for the forthcoming non-domestic Revaluation, with the comprehensive review of non-domestic forms, referred to as Assessor Information Notices (AINs), being undertaken across the various SAA standing committees. The issuing and ingathering of the AINs provides the basis of data analysis associated with a non-domestic revaluation. SAA Practice Notes will also be reviewed following the outcomes of the information gathering process. The SAA have developed a project plan for the 2023 non-domestic revaluation.

Section 3 – (Inserts a new section into the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975 requiring an Assessor to include a mark in appropriate entries in the Valuation Roll to show that it relates to newly built lands and heritages, or to improved lands and heritages, which the local authority will be able to use to identify properties which may be eligible for business growth accelerator relief).

Progress update: Procedures have been developed within Assessors' offices in order that a marker can be placed in the Valuation Roll were deemed appropriate as a result of the Non-Domestic Rates (Relief for New and Improved Properties) (Scotland) Regulations 2022. The SAA have developed a staff guidance note to ensure that consistency of approach is achieved across the country

Section 5 – (Amends Section 19 of the Local Government (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1963 to require that certain subjects contained within parks should be entered in the Valuation Roll). The subjects to be entered are those which are occupied by a person or body other than a local authority or the Crown, or where persons may be required to pay for access to facilities or for goods or services.

Progress update: A staff guidance note has been developed by the SAA to ensure consistent practice throughout Scotland, with information still being ingathered as at 31 March 2022 in order that entries may be made in Valuation Rolls.

Section 9 – (Amends Section 3 of the 1975 Act to allow Ministers to prescribe that Assessors must give ratepayers additional information at Revaluation.)

Progress update: Discussions continue within the SAA with regards to how best to facilitate the provision of information at the SAA Portal in respect of the 2023 Revaluation in connection with requirements to publish certain information when draft valuations are published. Such work forms part of the SAA Revaluation Project Plan.

Section 10 – (Makes significant changes to the appeal arrangements enabling a “proposal” to be made to the Assessor in the first instance. Where no agreement is reached as to what should be done about a proposal an appeal may be submitted to the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS). Whilst this section sets out the basic framework of the new appeal system, much of the detail of the procedure will be contained within secondary legislation.

Progress update: The outcome of a consultation undertaken by the Scottish Government on the revised non-domestic appeal system is still awaited, as is the outcome of the Scottish Government’s proposals on the transfer of the work of Valuation Appeal Panels (VAPs) to a new Tribunal set up within the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service. A Stakeholder Reference Group to help facilitate the transfer of the duties currently undertaken by VAPs has met several times with SAA representatives participating in the group meetings. The proposed changes to the non-domestic appeal system in Scotland will present major challenges to all Assessors, and indeed other stakeholders.

Section 26 – (Gives powers for Assessors to issue Assessor Information Notices (AINs) requiring the return of information which the Assessor may reasonably require for the purposes of exercising his/her functions in relation to non-domestic rates in respect of the lands and heritages set out in the notice. Information may be requested from the proprietor, tenant or occupier or any person who the Assessor thinks has the information).

Progress update: Appropriate procedures have/are being implemented across Assessors’ offices in connection with AINs and, in particular, the new civil penalties regime. The SAA has also developed staff guidance in respect of the new civil penalty powers to ensure consistency of approach across Scotland.

Section 30 – (Provides for civil penalties to be issued for failure to return requested information within certain time periods.)

Progress update: As update above regarding Section 26.

The SAA has continued to work positively with the Scottish Government and stakeholders to consider the detailed application of the significant reforms introduced by the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020, and will continue to do so via the various forums set up for stakeholder engagement purposes.



2021/22

Domestic property assessment

All domestic properties in Scotland are allocated to a council tax band. Assessors are responsible for maintaining the council tax valuation lists that show each dwelling and its corresponding band up to date. The council tax bands are used by local authorities to collect circa £2.75B of council tax.

The 2,688,996 dwellings in Scotland are distributed across the 8 council tax bands as shown in Table 1.

The bands are all based on the Assessor's estimate of what the dwelling would have been worth in 1991. Unlike non-domestic properties, there is currently no regular revaluation of domestic properties.



TABLE 1:
ALLOCATION OF DWELLINGS BETWEEN COUNCIL TAX BANDS IN SCOTLAND, 31 MARCH 2022

BAND	1991 VALUE RANGE	NUMBER OF DWELLINGS
A	£0 - £27,000	550,509
B	£27,001 - £35,000	606,581
C	£35,001 - £45,000	433,478
D	£45,001 - £58,000	367,197
E	£58,001 - £80,000	364,954
F	£80,001 - £106,000	214,790
G	£106,001 - £212,000	136,983
H	>£212,000	14,504

Total number of dwellings · 2,688,996

The above totals exclude garage and domestic storage premises that are also assessed. Assessors added 27,149 new dwellings to valuation lists during 2021/22

2021/22

Electoral Registration

The SAA Electoral Registration Committee, which comprises all fifteen Scottish Electoral Registration Officers and their senior staff, met on a regular basis during 2021/22. The Committee itself has met virtually during the year. This has proved effective and efficient, though it is hoped to return to some meetings being held in person during 2022/23.

The Committee has continued to work with partner organisations, such as the Electoral Management Board for Scotland (EMB), Scottish Government (SG), The Electoral Commission (EC), Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the Association of Electoral Administrators.

The SAA was represented on the following:

- EMB
- Electoral Integrity Programme (EIP) Strategic Stakeholders Group
- EIP Expert Panel
- EIP Business Change Network
- DLUHC's Accessibility Working Group
- EC/DLUHC Elections Co-ordination and Advisory Board
- EC/DLUHC Elections, Registration and Referendum Working Group
- The Scottish Parliament's Political Parties Panel.

The SAA met regularly with the Scottish Government's Elections Team and worked closely with them, the Electoral Commission and the EMB to plan for the May 2022 Scottish Council elections. We have also engaged with both governments over the impact of the Elections Act 2022 on registration activity in Scotland.

OUTCOMES

The Scottish Parliament Elections in May 2021 were held against the background of the Covid 19 pandemic. There were no electoral registration issues arising and indeed the advertising campaign, household notification letters and an earlier postal vote application deadline all facilitated a significant increase in the number of electors opting to vote by post.

The canvass in 2021 went smoothly with house-to-house enquiries resuming again after the pandemic. In addition to the canvass any eligible prisoners are invited to register to vote. Scottish EROs already invite any eligible school pupils who aren't registered to register to vote. We also invite anyone identified as part of the canvass as not being on register. Registration is a year round activity and EROs across Scotland pro-actively identify potential electors and invite them to register to vote.

The new Registers published on 1 December 2021 contained 4,028,717 parliamentary electors and 4,245,217 local government electors, this represented an increase of 0.4% and

0.9% respectively on 1 December 2020.

The publication of the new Registers in December captures the Scottish electorate at a particular point in time. However, registration is a year round activity and the Registers across Scotland were updated on a monthly basis, in accordance with the law, between January and November. The electorate for the Scottish Parliament Election in May 2021 was 4,280,785 of which a record 1,011,321 opted to vote by post which equated to 23.62% of the electorate.

LOOKING AHEAD

The UK Government is in the process of implementing the measures within the Elections Act 2022, including voter ID, online absent vote applications, three yearly renewals of absent votes and an extension of the Overseas Electors franchise. This will see new duties for Electoral Registration Officers in Scotland and the SAA will continue to engage with DLUHC on the implementation programme.



Going forward

Going forward the work of members of the SAA in relation to non-domestic rates will be primarily focused on the undertakings associated with the forthcoming non-domestic revaluation. The revaluation, effective from 1 April 2023, will involve a comprehensive programme of information gathering and data analysis which will feed into discussions undertaken by SAA Working Groups and standing Committees in respect of the valuations of a vast range of subject types. Such discussions will lead to the development of over one hundred valuation Practice Notes which will assist in the revaluation of valuation roll entries across Scotland. The reforms contained within the Non-domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020 will be factored into the SAA non-domestic revaluation plan, and will include the provision of more information to ratepayers as part of the revaluation project.

The SAA will continue engagement with relevant parties regarding the introduction of a proposed new two stage non-domestic rates appeals procedure, due to come into effect with effect from 1 January 2023, whereby appeals will be managed and heard by the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service, as opposed to the various Valuation Appeal Panels which currently undertake such work across the country.

There also remains the uncertainty with regards to how the voluminous levels of non-domestic appeals, lodged across Scotland as a result of the pandemic, will be resolved. Such appeals have a disposal date of 31 December 2023, however the resourcing of the resolution of the appeals - should they be pursued - could have a significant impact on Assessors' offices.

Continued



In respect of Council Tax, work will continue to ensure that statutory duties associated with maintaining the Valuation List is undertaken, although the impact of a non-domestic revaluation, in particular with the numerous changes as a result of the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Act 2020 attached to that revaluation, will pose real challenges to Assessors' offices.

With regards to electoral registration, the SAA will continue to engage with both the United Kingdom and Scottish Governments to fully implement electoral reforms associated with the Elections Bill which is expected to receive Royal Assent in April 2022. These reforms include the requirement to show identification at polling stations, changes to postal voting, changes to proxy voting, changes for European Union citizens, and changes to overseas voting.

The period 2022/2023 will see significant challenges to Assessors and their staff. The SAA through its well-established standing committees and working groups structure will plan for and aim to meet all the forthcoming challenges through continued sharing of best practice, collaborative working, and continuous forward planning.



Appendix 1:

Property types exempted from inclusion in valuation rolls

Agricultural land
and buildings

ATM sites in rural areas

Dwellings
*(these are subject
to council tax)*

Embassies, consulates
and trade missions

Fish farms

Foreign military bases

Forestry and woodlands

Renewable
microgeneration plant
and machinery up to
50KW electricity/up
to 45KW thermal

Offshore facilities

Public parks



Appendix 2:

Valuation Roll on 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022

PROPERTY TYPE	NO. OF SUBJECTS 1 APRIL 2021	TOTAL RV 1 APRIL 2021	NO. OF SUBJECTS 31 MARCH 2022	TOTAL RV 31 MARCH 2022
Shops	54,146	£1,563,617,767	54,135	£1,573,134,362
Public Houses	3,574	£121,069,200	3,546	£120,467,250
Offices including banks	45,862	£1,030,294,669	46,100	£1,025,884,819
Hotels etc.	5,965	£279,732,723	5,848	£283,951,080
Industrial subjects including factories, warehouses & stores	55,769	£1,279,634,489	56,773	£1,269,822,809
Leisure, entertainment, caravans & holiday sites	26,551	£295,763,655	27,466	£296,480,185
Garages and filling stations	4,166	£73,273,835	4,128	£72,532,255
Cultural	1,322	£55,470,080	1,335	£53,400,270
Sporting subjects	14,601	£33,085,966	14,566	£32,855,191
Education and training	3,620	£566,717,650	3,596	£560,083,650
Public service subjects	9,763	£352,400,020	9,720	£345,282,840
Communications (non formula)	380	£25,619,096	375	£24,170,311
Quarries & mines	662	£15,601,956	661	£14,399,270
Petrochemical	136	£115,243,120	135	£109,111,620
Religious	6,011	£56,963,750	5,999	£57,616,965
Health & medical	3,202	£234,246,700	3,210	£230,674,415
Other	17,266	£151,974,883	17,590	£151,599,495
Care facilities	3,051	£124,719,185	3,067	£125,885,685
Advertising	1,731	£10,774,665	1,640	£10,831,815
Undertakings	1,242	£938,933,927	1,271	£937,963,222
All properties	259,020	£7,325,137,336	261,161	£7,296,147,509

Appendix 3:

Scottish Ratepayers Forum membership

Association of Convenience Stores

British Hospitality Association

Chemical Industries Association

Confederation of British Industry

COSLA

Federation of Small Businesses

Forum of Private Businesses

Horticultural Trades Association

IRRV

Petrol Retailers Association

RICS

Scottish Chambers of Commerce

Scottish Council for Development of Industry

Scottish Grocers Association

Scottish Hospitality Group

Scottish Land & Estates

Scottish Licensed Trade Association

Scottish Property Federation

Scottish Retail Consortium

Scottish Renewables

Scottish Self Catering Association

Scottish Tourism Alliance

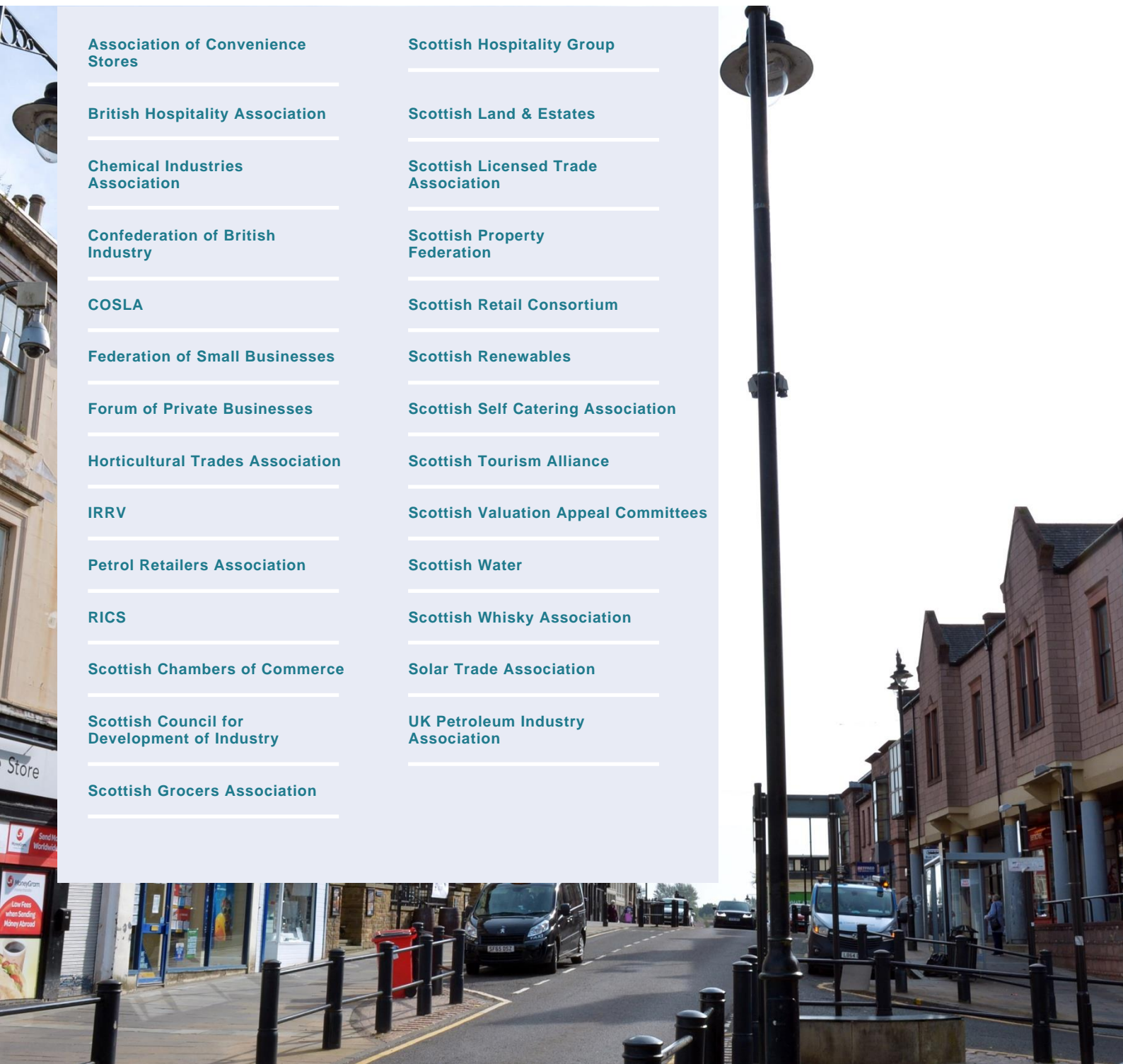
Scottish Valuation Appeal Committees

Scottish Water

Scottish Whisky Association

Solar Trade Association

UK Petroleum Industry Association



Appendix 4: Scottish Rating Surveyors Forum membership

Avison Young	Knight Frank
BNP Paribas	Montagu Evans
CBRE	Ryden
Colliers International	Savills
FG Burnett	Scottish Water
Gerald Eve	Shepherd
GL Hearn	Whitelaw Baikie
IRRV	WYM Rating
Jones Lang Lasalle	

