

# THE HIGHLAND & WESTERN ISLES VALUATION JOINT BOARD

## Annual Complaints Report 1 March 2024 – 28 February 2025

### Background

The Highland & Western Isles Valuation Joint Board (HWIVJB) is committed to providing high-quality customer services and we value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services. In April 2021, the HWIVJB published its updated Model Complaints Procedure and under the requirements of the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman this annual complaints report will be published on our website.

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

Complaints may be made about things like:

- Failure or refusal to provide a service
- Inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
- Dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual
- Failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services <sup>i</sup>
- Failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
- Conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor (**except** where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves); or
- Disagreement with a decision <sup>ii</sup>

Complaints may involve more than one HWIVJB service or be about someone working on our behalf.

There are some things that we are unable to deal with through our complaints handling procedure which include:

- A routine first-time request for a service
- A first-time report of a fault
- A request for compensation only
- Issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal
- Disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (such as for freedom of information and subject access requests), or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector – such as council tax or non-domestic rating and the electoral register
- Formal complaints concerning valuations under the Valuation Acts
- Objections to inclusions on the electoral register
- A request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information (Scotland) Acts
- A grievance by a staff member or a grievance relating to employment or staff recruitment
- A concern raised internally by a member of staff (which was not about a service they received, such as a whistleblowing concern)
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision

- Abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our organisation or staff where such actions would be covered by our Customer Contact – Unacceptable Actions Policy; or
- A concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue (**except** where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf).

Our complaints procedure has two stages:

- Stage 1 – frontline response
- Stage 2 – investigation of complaint

Between 1 March 2024 and 28 February 2025, the HWIVJB recorded and dealt with the following complaints:

Period	No. of Complaints	Service	Outcome	Outcome
Q1 Mar – May	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	Upheld
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 2	Resolved
	1	Assessor	Stage 2	Upheld
Q2 Jun – Aug	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	Not upheld
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	Not upheld
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	Resolved
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	Resolved
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	Resolved
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	Not upheld
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	Not upheld
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 2	Resolved
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 2	Resolved
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 2	Resolved
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 2	Partially upheld
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 2	Partially upheld
Q3 Sep – Nov	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 2	Not upheld
Q4 Dec – Feb	1	Assessor	Stage 2	Not upheld
	1	Assessor	Stage 2	Not upheld
	1	Electoral Registration Officer	Stage 1	Not upheld
<b>Total Stage 1 complaints</b>		<b>9</b>		
<b>Total Stage 2 complaints</b>		<b>10 (1 received at Stage 1, escalated to Stage 2)</b>		

Of the 19 complaints received, 9 (47%) were responded to in full at stage 1 within 5 working days. The average number of days to respond to these complaints was 2.3 working days.

Of the stage 2 complaints, 6 of these were responded to within the 20 working days. The average time taken to deal with stage 2 complaints was 18.8 days.

The following actions have been taken to improve service delivery:

- Electoral staff who deal with the [ero@highland.gov.uk](mailto:ero@highland.gov.uk) mailbox were reminded that they needed to let enquirers know when e-mails had been forwarded to Elections Teams within constituent authorities

Consideration is being given on guidance for acceptable response times to telephone enquiries and e-mails for staff. A review is also being carried out of how correspondence is sent during the self-catering unit audit.

## Trends

From 1 March 2023 to 29 February 2024, we managed 9 complaints. Whilst there has been a significant increase in complaints during the period 1 March 2024 to 28 February 2025, a UK Parliamentary General Election was held on 4 July 2024. Most of the electoral registration complaints related to statutory procedure.

Further information on our Complaints Procedure can be found by visiting our website:

<https://www.saa.gov.uk/h-wi-vjb/comments-and-complaints/>

Information on complaints outcomes, actions taken, and quarterly key performance indicators are also available on our website.

Mandy Thomson  
6 June 2025

<sup>i</sup> **except** where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector

<sup>ii</sup> **except** where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector