**The Agriculture Appeals Office Customer Charter**

This Customer Charter is a clear statement describing the level of service our customers can expect from the Agriculture Appeals Office.

**Our Mission**

 The mission of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is:

 *“The mission of the Agriculture Appeals Office is to provide an independent, accessible, fair, efficient and timely agriculture appeals service for scheme applicants appealing against decisions issued under designated Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine schemes, and to support the delivery, through membership, secretariat and administrative support, to the Forestry Appeals Committee, of an appeals service for decisions issued by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine on forestry licences; through* secretariat and administrative support to the Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board (ALAB), of appeal services for decisions issued by the Department on aquaculture licences *and to deliver those services in a courteous manner.”*

**Our Commitment to our Customers**

We are committed to providing our customers with the most timely, efficient and courteous service possible. All customers will be treated equally and we will make every effort to ensure that the services we provide meet your needs and expectations. This Customer Charter is our statement on the levels of service our customers can expect in their dealings with us.

We aim to achieve this by:

• Providing comprehensive information in a user-friendly format

• Giving you the best possible service and providing helpful advice

 • Setting real and achievable targets for service delivery

 • Treating everyone properly, fairly, impartially and with courtesy

• Striving to ensure that your rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation are upheld in the delivery of our services

 • Aiming to meet any special need you may have

We will continue to review our quality of service to our customers.

**Help us to help you by**

• Quoting reference numbers (e.g. herd number, forestry contract (CN, TFL) number etc) when contacting us about an existing appeal or query

 • Providing a daytime telephone number or e-mail address in your correspondence if available

 • Provide accurate and clear information and submit all necessary supporting documentation

 • Check that all appeal applications are fully completed and signed

 • Submit appeals in sufficient time before the closing date and obtain proof of posting

 • Ensure correspondence is sent to the correct address

 • Inform us of any changes in circumstances which may have a bearing on your appeal (e.g. address, phone number, mobile number, email address etc)

 • Respond quickly to any queries or requests for any additional information in support of applications

 • Treating our staff with courtesy and respect

**Contact by Telephone**

In order to protect your privacy rights and to comply with data protection requirements you may be required to answer security questions when dealing with the Agriculture Appeals Office

 • Our staff will answer your telephone enquiries promptly and politely

 • Staff will identify themselves by name and the name of the Section you have called

 • We will try to answer your questions straight away. If it is necessary to transfer your call you will be advised of the reason and the individual or area you are being transferred to. Your call should not be transferred more than once, where possible

 • If your query cannot be answered, we promise to take your details and where possible inform you as to when you can expect to be contacted again

 • Except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. annual leave, sick leave) voicemail messages will be checked daily. Voicemail messages will be dealt with promptly, insofar as possible

**Contact by Letter**

 • Correspondence will be acknowledged as soon as possible

 • Correspondence will be responded to in clear plain language

 **Contact by e-mail**

• Emails requiring a response will, insofar as possible, be acknowledged within 1 working day

 • A full response will be issued within 20 working days

 • Where this is not possible an interim response will be issued to you within 10 working days with the contact details of the person dealing with your correspondence and the date when you can expect a full response

• All e-mail correspondence will include contact name, postal address, telephone number and e-mail address.

• All staff will use automated e-mail responses when out of the office with information on alternative contacts

**Visitors to the Agriculture Appeals Office**

• Visitors to the Agriculture Appeals Officer will be treated with courtesy and dealt with efficiently

and promptly

• We will try to answer your questions fully. If we cannot do this at the time of your visit we will arrange to phone you, or write to you if you prefer

 • We will ensure that our office comply with occupational health and safety standards, as far as reasonably practicable

 • We will ensure that our offices and services are accessible for people with disabilities.

 **We ask our customers to**

 • Treat our staff in the way you would like to be treated yourself. Specifically, we ask that you do not use abusive or threatening language in your communication with us.

**Service through Irish**

 • Every effort will be made to accommodate customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish

 • We are committed to meeting our obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003.

**Website and Publications**

 • We are committed to the ongoing maintenance and development of our website to ensure that it is accessible, informative and up to date

 • Publications will be clear and understandable and available on the website.

**Statutory Obligations**

We are fully committed to fulfilling our statutory obligations in relation to Data Protection, Equality, Freedom of Information and Access to Information on the Environment, Prompt Payments of Accounts and Safety, Health & Welfare at Work.

**Freedom of Information**

The Agriculture Appeals Office fully complies with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2014. We will make every effort to provide you with as much information as possible informally outside the terms of the Act. Formal requests for Agriculture Appeals can be made by contacting appeals@agriappeals.gov.ie and for Forestry Appeals Committee requests please email forestry@agriappeals.gov.ie. Please also include the following:

* That you wish to make a request under the FOI Acts;
* Provide as much information as possible about the records being sought;
* In what format you wish to receive any records released

**Access to Information on the Environment**

An Access to Information on the Environment Request relating to Agriculture appeals can be made by contacting appeals@agriappeals.gov.ie and for Forestry Appeals Committee requests please email forestry@agriappeals.gov.ie. Please also include the following:

* That you wish to make an Access to Information on the Environment;
* Provide as much information as possible about the records being sought;
* In what format you wish to receive any records released

**Data Protection**

Data Protection access requests relating to Agriculture appeals can be made by contacting appeals@agriappeals.gov.ie and for Forestry Appeals Committee requests please email forestry@agriappeals.gov.ie.

Should you have any queries on Freedom of Information requests, Access to Information on the Environment or Data Protection please call the Agriculture Appeals Office on 057 8631900 or via email for Agriculture appeals to appeals@agriappeals.gov.ie or Forestry Appeals to forestry@agriappeals.gov.ie.