



Agricultural Land Tribunal Wales Annual Report 2019 – 2020



Tribiwnlys Tir
Amaethyddol
Cymru

Agricultural
Land Tribunal
Wales

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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce the Annual Report of the Agricultural Land Tribunal for Wales for 2019/20.

As this Report shows, the Tribunal continues to be very active dealing with disputes under the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 (mainly, applications to succeed to the tenancy on the tenant's death or retirement) and drainage disputes under the Land Drainage Act 1991.

In mid 2019, the Tribunal, through the Judicial Appointment Commission, began recruitment of 2 new Deputy Chairpersons. Those positions are presently unfilled. That competition was then subject to delay on account of COVID-19 restrictions but will shortly resume. Several candidates were shortlisted, and will be interviewed (remotely). The Tribunal is also about to launch (also through the Judicial Appointments Commission) a competition to recruit new members to our landowner panel. I look forward to being able to report next year that appointments were made and we have thereby been able to increase the strength and depth of our judicial and membership resource.

These are exciting times for the Tribunal as part of the system of delivering justice in Wales. The Commission on Justice in Wales (led by Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd) has now reported to the Welsh Government, making a series of recommendations which could effect the work of the Tribunal in the future. The Law Commission of England and Wales is also about to start work which will lead to a report on the Tribunals system in Wales.

The Tribunal continues to aim to provide a user-friendly, efficient, and expert service at a minimum cost to litigants and the public purse. Unlike the court system, no fee is payable when an application is made to the Tribunal and in nearly all cases there will be no liability to pay the costs of the other side, regardless of the outcome. Unlike private arbitrations or third party determinations, no fee is payable by the parties for the panel hearing a case. The Tribunal is therefore a very cost-effective means of resolving disputes.

The Tribunal is an expert Tribunal, and I express my continuing thanks to the Tribunal's panels of farmers, landowners, and drainage experts. We draw heavily on their knowledge and experience in resolving disputes which come before us. All corners of Wales, and all types of Welsh agricultural activity, have a voice in the Tribunal. I also thank my two co-opted judges, Judge Claire Jones, and Judge Trefor Lloyd, for their contribution (often, behind the scenes) to the work of the Tribunal over the year.

Finally, I use this opportunity to thank the Tribunal's Secretary, (now joined in his work by newly appointed Tribunal Support Officer), its business managers and their colleagues in the Welsh Tribunals Unit for all their hard work.

Christopher McNall
Chairman of the Tribunal

Section 1 – About Us

In this section:

- Basis for the Tribunal
- The Tribunal's Functions
- The Tribunal's Rules/Regulations
- The Tribunal's Process
- Members of the Tribunal
- Appointments & Retirements
- Contacting the Tribunal
- Accessing the Tribunal

Basis for the Tribunal

The Agricultural Land Tribunal for Wales (ALT Wales) is a statutory organisation established under the Agriculture Act 1947 with jurisdiction for the geographical area of Wales.

The tribunal is independent of government. The ALT Wales plays an important role in determining disputes and other issues between agricultural landlords and tenants arising from tenancy agreements held under the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986. The ALT Wales also determines disputes relating to the drainage of agricultural land under the Land Drainage Act 1991.

The overriding aim of the ALT Wales is to:

- Provide a high performing, cost effective customer service for tribunal users and members
- Ensure that all aspects of the tribunal's work are administered in such a way as to achieve fair, independent and timely adjudication
- Operate within the legislative framework applicable in Wales

The Tribunal's Functions

ALT Wales deals with disputes relating to:

Land drainage:

- Restoration or improvement of ditches

Tenancy agreements:

- Notice to quit a holding
- Succession on death
- Succession on retirement

Agricultural applications:

- Bad husbandry
- Burning of heather or grass
- Fixed equipment
- Long-term improvement/s
- Market gardens

The Tribunal's Rules/Regulations

Regulations governing the tribunal's procedures are set out in:

- The Agricultural Land Tribunal (Area) Order 1982 (SI 1982/97)
- The Land Drainage Act 1991
- The Agricultural Land Tribunal (Rules) Order 2007.

The Tribunal's Process

To make an application or appeal you must complete and send the relevant application form to the ALT Wales. Applications will be accepted in by post or email. There are no fees for making an application to the tribunal.

The tribunal will acknowledge your application. The tribunal will register your case within 10 working days or write to you to request further information. On registration, a copy of the Application will be sent to the party named as the Respondent.

An application to the ALT Wales does not necessarily result in a hearing. Many cases are settled between the parties and do not require a hearing. If the application proceeds to a tribunal hearing; the panel is composed of a legally qualified chairperson and two lay members. Lay members have been appointed for their general expertise and knowledge.

Before almost every Tribunal hearing, the Tribunal panel will conduct an inspection of the land relating to the application. The tribunal may inspect the buildings, land and any livestock, equipment and produce.

Tribunal hearings will normally be held in public and take place near to the land in question. Tribunal hearings are managed by the chairperson or deputy chairperson, who must have a legal qualification. The other two panel members are lay members who have knowledge and experience of farming, drainage and landowner matters in Wales.

The Tribunal publishes its decisions on the website for the ALT Wales. Decisions of the ALT Wales can be appealed on limited grounds to the Lands Chamber of the Upper Tribunal.

Full information and guidance, about the tribunal and its procedures, is provided on the website for the ALT Wales. Alternatively please contact the tribunal secretariat for further information or if you would like to receive publications in a different format. The contact details can be found on page 8.

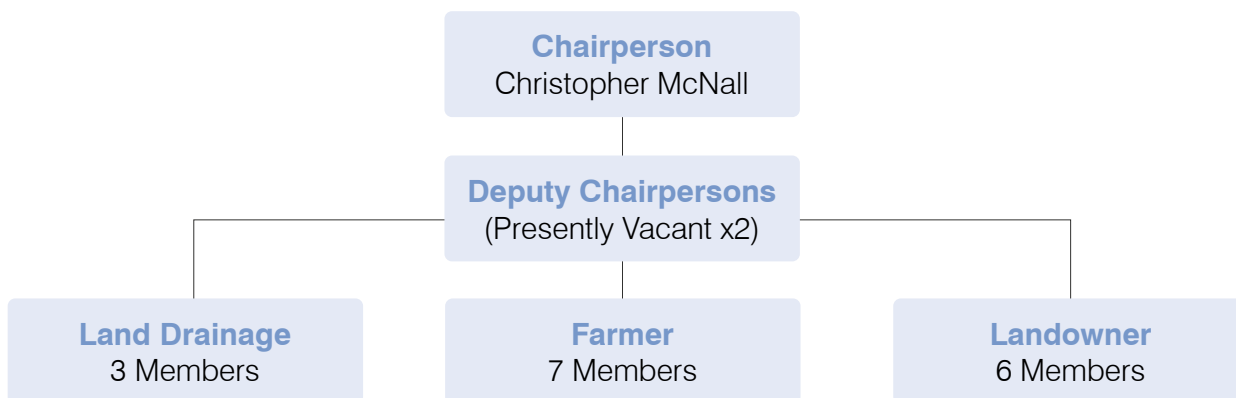
Members of the Tribunal

The Lord Chancellor is responsible for the appointment and re-appointment of the chairperson, deputy chairperson and lay members. Appointments are made following the advertisement of vacancies and competitive interview by the Judicial Appointments Commission.

Chairperson: The chairperson has judicial responsibility for the tribunal.

Lay Members: Lay members have a wide range of relevant knowledge and experience which they bring to each hearing.

Secretariat: The day-to-day administration is largely delegated to the secretariat which deals with all the preliminary paperwork and the processing of applications to the tribunal. The secretariat consults the chairperson on all legal points arising during the preliminary pre-hearing stages of the proceedings and passes on the chairperson's rulings and directions in writing to the parties. The secretariat acts as a point of contact for chairpersons, members and tribunal users and attends some hearings to help with the efficient running of proceedings.



Appointments

During 2019-2020 there were:

- 0 appointments
- 1 retirement
- 1 resignation.

Secretariat Appointment

- 1 Tribunal Support Officer

Appraisals

During 2019-2020 there were no appraisals undertaken.

Training

The Tribunal's annual training event was held during September 2019. It is intended to hold the next event during September 2020.

Contacting the Tribunal

To contact the secretariat to the ALT Wales:

Tribunal Address: Agricultural Land Tribunal Wales
Government Buildings
Spa Road East
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 5HA

Tribunal Helpline: 03000 259809

Tribunal E-mail: agriculturallandtribunalwales@gov.wales

Tribunal Website: alt.gov.wales

Accessing the Tribunal

The Tribunal is happy to communicate with you in English or Welsh. If a Welsh speaker is not immediately available then we will arrange for a Welsh-speaking member of Tribunal staff to phone you back.

You can choose to have your Tribunal hearing conducted in Welsh or English. If your first language is not Welsh or English and you wish to speak in your first language during the hearing, we can arrange for an interpreter to be present. If you need a sign language interpreter to attend the hearing we will arrange this.

If you or anyone you are bringing to the hearing has any other access requirements that may affect our arrangements for the hearing, provision will be made.

To enable arrangements for interpreters or to make provision for any additional needs of attendees, sufficient notice must be given to the secretariat.

Section 2 – Performance and Progress

In this section:

- Numbers and statistics
- Reviews and onward appeals
- Achievement against key performance indicators
- Complaints

Numbers and Statistics

A Tribunal year runs from April to March.

The following statistics are collated:

- number of applications received and registered
- type of application received and registered
- number of applications finalised
- outcome of applications

Table 2.1: Number of Applications Received and Registered 2019-2020

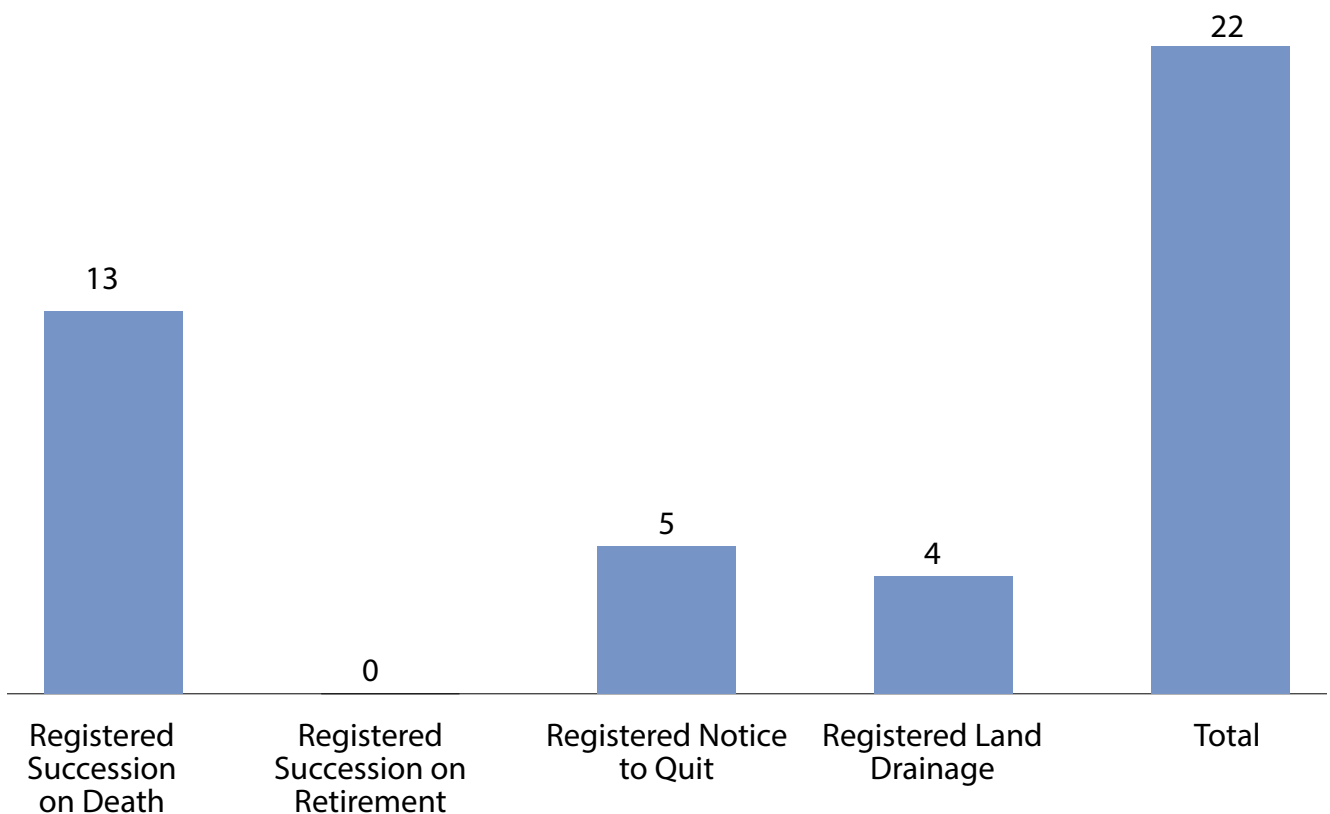


Table 2.2: Number of Applications Received and Registered by Year and Type of Application during 2015-2020*

Type of Application	Number of Applications Received and Registered				
	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Land Drainage	4	5	4	3	6
Succession on Death	13	18	11	11	7
Succession on Retirement	0	1	1	1	0
Consent to Notice to Quit	5	5	1	2	7
Certificate of Bad Husbandry	0	0	0	0	0
Fixed Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
Total	22	29	17	17	20

Table 2.3: Number of Applications Finalised by year during 2015-2020*

Type of Application	Number of Applications Finalised (includes carry over from 2015-2016)				
	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Land Drainage	6	6	5	1	2
Succession on Death	9	15	14	8	5
Succession on Retirement	1	0	2	0	0
Consent to Notice to Quit	1	1	2	4	3
Certificate of Bad Husbandry	0	0	0	0	0
Fixed Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
Total	17	22	23	13	10

*During 2015-2020 there have been no applications relating to:

- Consent to long term improvements
- Burning of heather or grass
- Market gardens

Table 2.4: Progress of Applications in 2019-2020 by Outcome

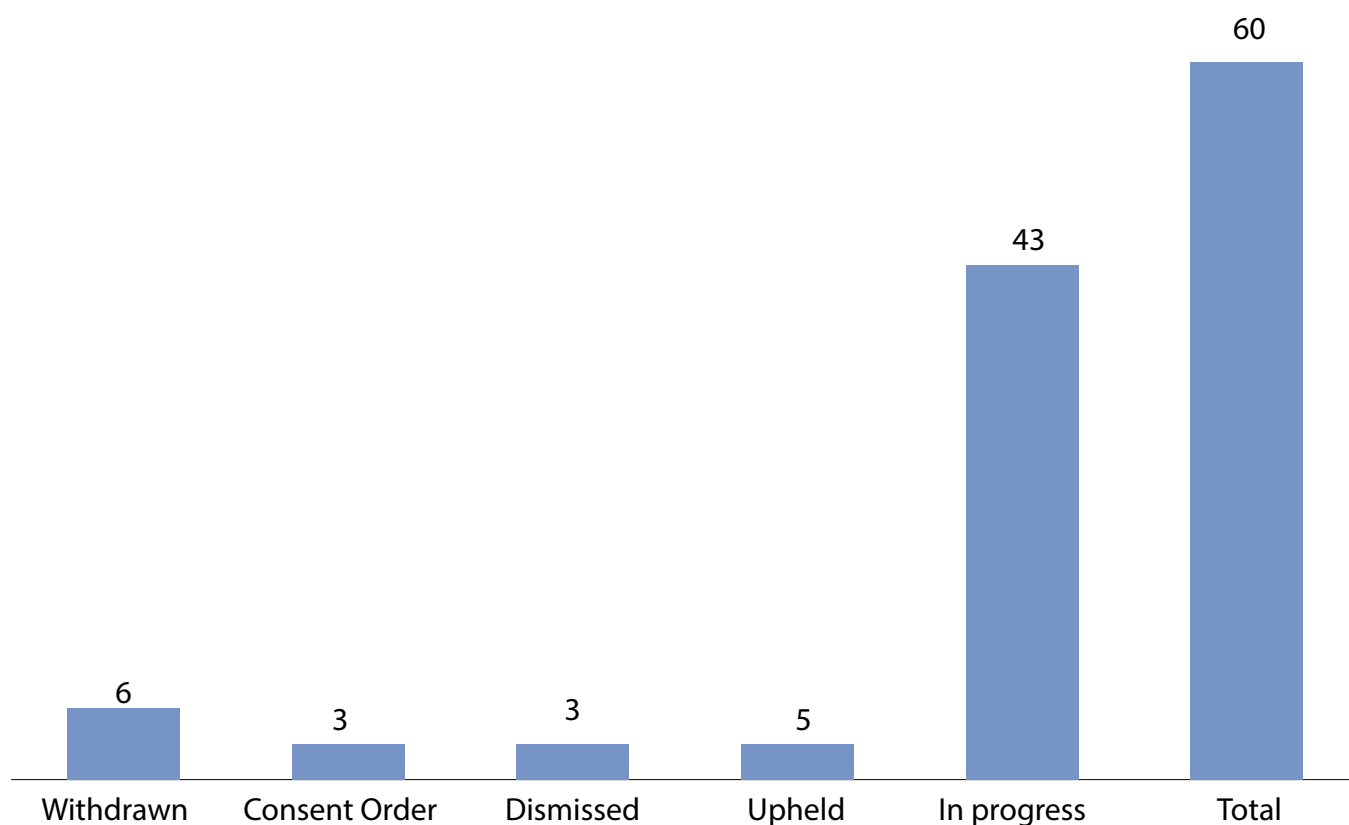


Table 2.5: Progress of Applications in 2019-2020 by Type of Case and Outcome

Type of Application	Withdrawn	Consent Order	Dismissed	Upheld	In Progress
Land Drainage	2	0	1	3	8
Succession on Death	3	3	2	1	23
Succession on Retirement	1	0	0	0	0
Consent to Notice to Quit	0	0	0	1	12
Certificate of Bad Husbandry	0	0	0	0	0
Consent to Long Term Improvements	0	0	0	0	0
Fixed Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
Total	6	3	3	5	43

During 2019-2020 there were:

- 2 physical hearings
- 3 paper hearings (where panel members would meet without the parties present)
- no telephone conferences (where panel members and parties would take part by phone).

Reviews and onward appeals

Applications for a review of a Tribunal Decision can be made by parties on limited grounds. Over the period of this report, no Applications were made.

Parties can appeal to the Upper Tribunal on a point of law. Permission for leave to appeal must first be sought from the Agricultural Land Tribunal for Wales. The Tribunal Decision letter will advise you about any deadlines. Two appeals were received during the course of the year.

Achievement against key performance indicators

To monitor how effectively services are delivered, we have key performance indicators aimed at measuring two key aspects of our business; the speed of our service and the quality of service through customer satisfaction.

To measure the speed of our service, we have a series of primary performance indicators based on the time taken to process an application – from receipt to the Hearing or disposal. To measure customer satisfaction, we used an indicator that is derived from periodic customer surveys.

Target: 95% of applications registered or pre-registration query dealt with within 10 working days of receipt of Application form	→	Target achieved in 100% of cases
Target: 95% of respondent's response to application to be issued to applicant within 10 working days of receipt	→	Target achieved in 100% of cases
Target: 95% of Drainage Reports and Net Annual Income Assessment Reports issued to parties within 10 working days of receipt	→	Target achieved in 100% of cases
Target: 100% of notice of hearing issued within 14 working days of the hearing	→	Target achieved in 100% of cases
Target: 95% of decisions issued within 30 working days of the hearing	→	Target achieved in 86% of cases
Target: 75% of applications discharged within 18 months	→	Target achieved in 92% of cases

Complaints

The Tribunal received no formal complaints during 2019-2020.

Section 3 – Our Customers

In this section:

- Customer satisfaction survey

Customer satisfaction survey

The Tribunal strives to improve customer service delivery and its aim is to put our customers at the heart of everything we do.

During the period April 2019 – March 2020, the Tribunal distributed a customer satisfaction survey with each Tribunal decision that was issued. The feedback from the survey enables us to gain a better understanding of our customers' needs and gives a valuable insight into what the Tribunal is doing well, as well as highlighting those areas where the Tribunal needs to improve.

We received 2 completed forms during this period. Of those:

- 100% of customers said the Tribunal was helpful when handling enquiries
- 100% of customers said that we responded quickly and that they were satisfied with the information received
- 100% of customers agreed that the Tribunal processed their case efficiently.

Section 4 – Business Priorities

In this section:

- Business priorities for 2020-2021

It is important that the Tribunal continues to develop in order to deliver the best possible service for our customers. This section is about how the Tribunal will build on its achievements through focusing on business priorities and our commitment to our customers.

Business Priorities 2020-2021

- Continue to deliver high quality service ensuring KPIs are met.
- Implementation of Members' Hearing Appraisals.
- Continue to monitor and update ALT Wales website.
- Organise annual training conference for tribunal members, identifying and responding to training needs.
- Ensure that the Tribunal continues to maintain the Welsh language standards.

Section 5 – Expenditure

In this section:

- Expenditure for 2019-2020

Expenditure for 2019-2020

Content	Amount
Members Fees and Expenses for tribunal proceedings	£16,000
Tribunal events (hearing costs)	£5,000
Members' Training	£4,000
Total*	£25,000

* rounded to the nearest £1,000