



Check, Challenge, Appeal (CCA)– Online Digital Service

- a work in progress

Yet another Government implementation of an IT system that is miserably failing its' users and to date is not fit for purpose. Cynics may say that the new online digital system for contesting business rates has been designed to deliberately dissuade ratepayers from challenging the rateable value of their properties.

The more accurate reason is that the system was introduced as an unfinished "beta test" and was designed at the initial stage to meet with the minimal requirements that the Government Digital Service had imposed on the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) to allow them to bring CCA to life.

Despite receiving little support during consultation with stakeholders in 2016 CCA was introduced by Government with very few changes in concept or legislation from what was first proposed. The stakeholder responses to the open consultations on both the proposed system and the draft Legislation were virtually ignored. Government also abandoned parliamentary scrutiny of the legislation to allow its speedy implementation before 1st April 2017.

There was little meaningful consultation with stakeholders on the digital "journey" they would be

required to take to contest their rating list assessments. The online digital CCA system became live on 1st April 2017. In its current form, despite a number of system upgrades, it has been plagued with issues for both ratepayers and agents. The system requires all data to be entered manually on a property by property basis which imposes an enormous burden for the ratepayer when initially claiming their organisations properties.

Issues include but not limited to–

- Inability to claim multiple properties - a ratepayer has to claim each property individually and under each specific company vehicle
- Inability for agent to claim clients' properties leading to greater workload for client
- Difficulty in registering company and personal details on 1st stage registration on the Government Gateway
- Difficulty in self certification of legal interest in property
- Rejection of claim by VOA if supporting documentation does not match information the VOA holds
- No online ability to monitor progress of check or challenge made

(continued)

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- Detailed Valuations displayed for bulk class property only e.g. shops industrial, offices – ratepayer or agent has to request others to be sent to them
- No ability to interface with agent database and electronic communication systems

At the beginning of August 2017 the VOA admitted that the matters needed attention and brought in staff from HMRC digital to help improve the functionality of the online system.

Upgrade August 2017

- Improvements to customer dashboard
- Option for customers to save progress and return when completing a check
- Ability for customers to amend/update account details

Upgrade September 2017

Claimed property screens improved so that properties can be easily filtered and sorted.

Further improvements that the Government stated were planned include:-

Late December 2017

The functionality to view Check and Challenge cases	Not yet Implemented
The ability to link multiple properties at once	Not yet Implemented
Improved management of agent permissions	Not yet Implemented
Improvements to the Challenge customer journey	Not yet Implemented
Online valuations for licensed properties	Not yet Implemented
Access to the application programming interface (API) developer sandbox for software developers	Not yet Implemented

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