



## Scottish Natural Heritage Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland  
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

# Complaints Handling Procedure A Guide for Customers

2017

**Scottish Natural Heritage is committed to providing high-quality customer services. We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve**

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This guide describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you what you can expect from us.

## What is a complaint?

Scottish Natural Heritage defines a complaint as being:

'An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about Scottish Natural Heritage's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of Scottish Natural Heritage.'

## What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- delays in responding to your enquiries and requests
- failure to provide a service
- our quality of service
- our policy
- treatment by or attitude of a member of staff
- our failure to follow proper procedure.

Your complaint may involve more than one service or be about someone working on our behalf.

## What can't I complain about?

There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:

- a routine first-time request for a service
- requests for compensation
- things that are covered by a right of appeal, for example if we refuse consent for an operation on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or as described in the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 (as amended).

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.

## Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. Please also read the section on 'Getting help to make your complaint'.

## How do I complain?

You can complain in person at any of our offices, by phone, in writing, or online via our complaints form at <http://www.snh.gov.uk/contact-us/online-enquiries-service/>

When complaining, tell us:

- your full name and contact details
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong
- how you want us to resolve the matter.

We can accept your complaint in Gaelic and, where appropriate, we will respond in Gaelic.

## What happens when I have complained?

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint.

Our complaints procedure has 2 stages:

### Stage one – frontline resolution

Frontline resolution aims to quickly resolve straightforward complaints that require little or no investigation. We aim to do this within 5 working days.

If for any reason we aren't able to resolve your complaint within 5 working days we will contact you to discuss the options. These may include an extension to the original timescale or, should the case be more complicated than we originally thought, undertaking a more detailed (Stage 2) investigation.

### Stage two – investigation

Stage 2 deals with three types of complaint:

- not been resolved at Stage 1
- complex in nature and are immediately apparent that detailed investigation is required
- involve members of senior management

When using Stage 2 we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 3 working days
- where appropriate, discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for
- provide a full response within 20 working days

If the investigation is particularly complex and we need longer than 20 working days to resolve the problem we will agree a revised time limit and keep you updated on progress.

## Independent external review

If, having gone through our complaints procedure, you are still dissatisfied you can appeal to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

The SPSO cannot normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure. You must have been informed of the outcome of your complaint, at stage 2, before raising it with the SPSO.
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

## How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within 6 months of the event you want to complain about.

If you find out that you have a reason to complain after 6 months of the event, you should raise this with us as soon as possible, and within 12 months of the event you want to complain about.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

## Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

### Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

t: 0131 556 6443

Website: [www.siaa.org.uk](http://www.siaa.org.uk)

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help customers access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, or Braille, tell us in person, contact us on 01463 725077, or email us at [SNH\\_Customer\\_Relations@snh.gov.uk](mailto:SNH_Customer_Relations@snh.gov.uk).

## Mediation

We recognise there are occasions where some outside assistance is required to bring about resolution. For such occasions we may offer to use the [Scottish Mediation Network](#) to help us reach a pragmatic solution.

## Unacceptable behaviours

We recognise that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. We also recognise that the reasons leading to a complaint may contribute to the way in which the issue is presented. However, there are occasions when we deem such actions to be unacceptable.

Our [Unacceptable Behaviour by Customers Statement](#) outlines the types of behaviours we deem to be unacceptable and the actions we may take.

## Contact details

A full office list can be found at: <http://www.snh.gov.uk/contact-us/how-to-contact-us/offices/>

Online enquiries and complaints: <http://www.snh.gov.uk/contact-us/online-enquiries-service/>

### Our main Area offices:

#### Argyll and The Outer Hebrides

David Maclennan  
Area Manager  
32 Francis Street, Stornoway,  
Isle of Lewis HS1 2ND  
t: 01851 705258 f: 01851 704900  
e: argyll\_outerhebrides@snh.gov.uk

#### Forth

Andy Dorin  
Area Manager  
46 Crossgate,  
Cupar, KY15 5HS  
t: 01334 654038 f: 01334 656924  
e: forth@snh.gov.uk

---

#### Northern Isles and North Highland

Kristin Scott  
Area Manager  
The Links, Golspie Business Park, Golspie,  
Sutherland KW10 6UB  
t: 01408 634063  
e: north@snh.gov.uk

#### South Highland

George Hogg  
Area Manager  
Fodderty Way, Dingwall Business Park,  
Dingwall IV15 9XB  
t: 01349 865333  
e: south\_highland@snh.gov.uk

---

#### Southern Scotland

Roddy Fairley  
Area Manager  
Greystone Park, 55-57 Moffat Road,  
Dumfries DG1 1NP  
t: 01387 272440 f: 01387 259247  
e: southern\_scotland@snh.gov.uk

#### Strathclyde and Ayrshire

Kerry Wallace  
Area Manager  
Caspian House, Mariner Court,  
Clydebank Business Park,  
Clydebank G81 2NR  
t: 0141 951 4488  
e: strathclyde\_ayrshire@snh.gov.uk

---

#### Tayside and Grampian

Denise Reed  
Area Manager  
Battleby, Redgorton, Perth, PH1 3EW  
t: 01738 444177 f: 01738 458611  
e: tayside\_grampian@snh.gov.uk

#### Martin Stubbs-Partridge

Communications Officer  
Great Glen House, Leachkin Road,  
Inverness IV3 8NW  
t: 01463 725077 f: 01463 725067  
e: martin.stubbs.partridge@snh.gov.uk

---

## **You can contact the SPSO:**

### **In Person**

SPSO  
4 Melville Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7NS

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

Online contact [www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)

Website: [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)

---

### **By Post**

SPSO  
Freepost EH641  
Edinburgh  
EH3 0BR

## **If your complaint is about an SNH Board or Committee Member, you can contact:**

### **Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland**

Thistle House  
91 Haymarket Terrace  
Edinburgh  
EH12 5HE

Telephone: 0300 011 0550

Email: [investigations@ethicalstandards.org.uk](mailto:investigations@ethicalstandards.org.uk)

Website: [www.ethicalstandards.org.uk/](http://www.ethicalstandards.org.uk/)

## Quick guide to our complaints procedure

### COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by e-mail, in writing or use our online form at [www.snh.gov.uk/contact-us/customer-feedback/feedback/](http://www.snh.gov.uk/contact-us/customer-feedback/feedback/)

We have a **2-stage complaints procedure**. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly. But if it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.



### STAGE 1: FRONTLINE RESOLUTION

We will always try to resolve your complaint as quickly as possible.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2.



### STAGE 2: INVESTIGATION

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage 1. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within **3 working days**. We will give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than **20 working days** *unless* there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.



### THE SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN

If, after receiving our final decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it.

We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.

We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.