



Lle i enaid gael llonydd
One of Britain's breathing spaces

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority **Complaints and Compliments Policy**

Review Date: April 2015

Complaints

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (the 'Authority') is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints submitted by members of the public. In this document, the term "complainant" refers to an individual or company submitting the complaint.
- 1.2. The Authority aims to clarify any issues complainants may have, and this policy sets out the procedure which the Authority will comply with once a complaint has been submitted. This policy also sets out the procedure complainants must follow when making a complaint to the Authority. Submitting a complaint does not affect a complainant's right to Authority services.
- 1.3. The Authority reviews complaints regularly and details of complaints are reported to the Authority's Audit and Scrutiny committee and Corporate Management Team. These reports detail information about the number and type of complaints that have been received. Wherever possible, this information is then used to improve services the subject of the complaint.
- 1.4. This policy is to be reviewed annually by the Authority's Complaints Officer.

2. How to complain

- 2.1. Complaints can be submitted to the Authority in any of the following ways:
 - Telephoning the Authority's complaints officer on 01874 620407 or 01874 624437. Please note however, the Authority may require you to submit your

complaint in writing / via the Authority's 'Complaints, Compliments and Comments Form'.

- By completing the Authority's 'Complaints, Compliments and Comments form', appended to this policy, and submitting the same to the Authority via email to complaintsandcompliments@beacons-npa.gov.uk or enquiries@beacons-npa.gov.uk, or by post to Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7HP.
- In writing to the above email or postal addresses.

2.2. The 'Complaints, Compliments and Comments Form' is available on the Authority's website, at the Authority's headquarters at Plas y Ffynnon, Brecon and all Authority run Information and Visitor Centres. The forms are available in both English and Welsh.

3. **Complaints Procedure**

3.1. On receipt of a complaint, the Authority will register the same and send an acknowledgement to the complainant within 5 working days from receipt of the complaint. Where the decision is made by the Authority not to investigate a complaint, a letter to this effect will be sent to the complainant within 20 working days from receipt of the complaint by the Authority.

3.2.

a) Stage I Complaint

- The complaint will be allocated to the relevant Director of the Department which is the subject of the complaint.
- The complaint is then investigated by the departmental Director, or where relevant by an Authority officer allocated by the departmental Director or Chief Executive Officer.
- In some circumstances, the investigating officer will request to meet with the complainant, or enter into further correspondence with them to obtain necessary information required to investigate the complaint sufficiently. It may also be necessary for the investigating officer to meet with Authority officers involved to establish the full extent of the complaint.
- Where the Authority requests further information from the complainant to enable the complaint to be progressed, the 20 working day time limit for the Authority to respond to the complaint will 'stop' until this further information has been received by the Authority. If the Authority does not receive this information within 20 working days from requesting the same, the complaint will be closed.
- The Authority aims to complete the Stage I complaint investigation and send the complainant a substantive response within 20 working days from receipt of the complaint. However, in some circumstances due to the complexity of

certain complaints the Authority may require an extension of time to investigate and respond fully to the complainant. In such cases, the Authority will inform the complainant within the 20 working day time period that an extension of time is required. The Authority will then provide a full and substantive response within 40 working days from receipt of the complaint. If the Authority requires an extension of time, the complainant will be regularly updated of progress by the investigating officer.

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Authority's Stage I complaint investigation and subsequent response, the complainant has the right to express this dissatisfaction to the Authority and request a review of their complaint with the view to a further complaint investigation (Stage II complaint investigation) being undertaken.

b) Stage II Complaint

- To request a Stage II complaint, the complainant must do so by requesting the same in writing, via email to complaintsandcompliments@beacons-mpa.gov.uk or enquiries@beacons-mpa.gov.uk or by post via letter to the Authority's headquarters at Plas y Ffynnon.
- A complainant may request a Stage II complaint in the following circumstances:
 - I. Where the Authority has had adequate opportunity to address the complaint, and has not provided a response in accordance with the Stage I requirements outlined at 3.2.a) above;
 - II. If the complainant does not consider the complaint has received adequate or proper consideration; or
 - III. If a complainant has received a response and remains aggravated or dissatisfied with the outcome.
- Should a complainant wish to request a Stage II complaint investigation then the complainant is required to provide a detailed explanation of all issues which they remain dissatisfied with or aggravated by, giving reasons why the Stage I complaint should be progressed to a Stage II complaint. The complainant is also required to give details of the desired outcome of the complaint investigations.
- Upon receipt of the Stage II complaint request, the request will be acknowledged within 5 working days and the matter will be brought to the attention of the Authority's Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer will then consider the Stage I complaint and outcome of the Stage I complaint investigation, and decide whether the complaint is sufficient to be progressed to a Stage II complaint investigation.
- In the event that the Chief Executive Officer considers that it is not expedient to progress the complaint to a Stage II complaint, the complainant will be advised of this decision, and the reasons for this decision in writing within 20 working days from receipt of the request for a Stage II complaint investigation.

- Where the Authority's Chief Executive Officer does consider that the Stage I complaint should be progressed to a Stage II complaint investigation, the complainant will be advised of this as soon as practicable and in any event within 5 working days. The Stage II complaint will then be logged by the Authority, and allocated to the relevant senior officer to investigate.
- The extent of the investigation and investigating officer will be dependent on the circumstances and complexity of the issues raised. In most cases, the complaint is investigated by an Authority departmental Director who did not investigate the initial Stage I complaint or the Authority's Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer.
- In some cases however, it may be relevant for the Authority to appoint an independent investigator from outside the Authority to investigate the Stage II complaint. This would only apply to very serious situations, for example where a complaint was made regarding the Authority's Monitoring Officer.
- The relevant evidence will then be investigated by the investigating officer, including files, notes of conversations and meetings, letters and emails or whatever may be relevant to the individual case. The Stage I complaint investigation will be reviewed, as will the Authority's response to the Stage I complaint investigation. If the complainant has any further information they wish to be considered during the Stage II complaint investigation, this must be submitted with the initial request for a Stage II complaint investigation.
- Where necessary, the investigating officer will request to meet with the complainant, or enter into further correspondence with them to obtain the necessary information required to investigate the complaint sufficiently. It may also be necessary for the investigating officer to meet with Authority officers involved to establish the full extent of the complaint.
- Where the Authority requests further information from the complainant to enable the complaint to be progressed, the 20 working day time limit for the Authority to respond to the complaint will 'stop' until this further information has been received by the Authority. If the Authority does not receive this information within 20 working days from requesting the same, the complaint will be closed.
- The Authority aims to complete the Stage II complaint investigation and send the complainant a substantive response within 20 working days from receipt of the Stage II complaint request. However, in some circumstances due to the complexity of certain complaints the Authority may require an extension of time to investigate and respond to the complaint fully. In such cases, the Authority will inform the complainant within the 20 working day time period that an extension of time is required. The Authority will then provide a full and substantive response within 40 working days from receipt of the Stage II complaint request. Where the Authority requires an extension of time, the complainant will be regularly updated of progress by the investigating officer.

4. Dealing with your complaint

- 4.1. All complaints received by the Authority are brought to the attention of, and monitored by, the Authority's Chief Executive Officer.
- 4.2. When a complaint is received the Authority will deal with this in line with the Authority's Complaints Procedure detailed above.
- 4.3. Complaints are dealt with seriously by the Authority and in an open and honest way. Where a third party is submitting a complaint on a complainant's behalf, the original complainant will be required to provide agreement of this to the Authority in writing.
- 4.4. The Authority will respect a complainant's right to privacy and confidentiality and will therefore treat complainants fairly and in accordance with the Authority's commitment to equality.
- 4.5. The Authority will normally only consider complaints that are submitted to the Authority within 12 months of the event subject of the complaint occurring. In exceptional circumstances the Authority may look at complaints which are made later than this. However, a complainant will have to evidence strong reasons why the complaint has not been brought to the Authority's attention sooner, and sufficient information will need to be made available by the complainant regarding the issue subject of the complaint, to enable the Authority to deal with the matter appropriately.

5. When there is more than one body involved

- 5.1. If a complaint covers more than one body including the Authority, the Authority will work with the other body to ensure the complaint is dealt with sufficiently.
- 5.2. If the complaint is regarding another body or contractor working on the Authority's behalf, a complainant may wish to raise the complaint informally with the third party first. However, once a complaint is formally submitting to the Authority, the Authority will investigate the same in accordance with the Authority's Complaints Procedure above.

6. Outcome

- 6.1. Once a formal complaint has been investigated, the Authority will inform the complainant of the findings in writing. If the investigation is the subject of a complex complaint, then it may be necessary for the Authority to produce a report. In both cases, the Authority will explain the findings and how the outcome has been reached.

- 6.2. In the Authority's substantive response detailing the outcome of the complaint investigation, the Authority will also indicate whether the complaint has been upheld or not.
- 6.3. If it is found that the Authority or Authority officers have not followed relevant processes, the Authority will explain why it happened and provide the complainant with an apology.
- 6.4. If it is found that there is fault with Authority's systems, the Authority will explain what is at fault and detail steps the Authority will take to ensure it does not occur again. The complainant will also be provided with an apology.

7. Putting Things Right

- 7.1. If the Authority didn't provide a service that should have been provided, the Authority will aim to provide an acceptable service as soon as possible.
- 7.2. If a complainant has incurred costs as a direct result of the subject-matter of the complaint, the Authority will give consideration to making good the loss that has been suffered.

8. What the Authority Expects from a Complainant

- 8.1. The Authority understands that all complainants have the right to complain, be understood and treated with respect. However, Authority employees have the same rights and the Authority will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour such as aggressive or abusive behaviour, or unreasonable demands. Please refer to the Authority's Unacceptable Actions by Complainants Policy for further information on how the Authority deals with unacceptable behaviour. Please note, where a complainant refuses to submit a Stage I or Stage II complaint in accordance with this policy, the Authority can still implement the Unacceptable Actions by Complainants Policy.

9. The Public Services Ombudsman For Wales

- 9.1. Complainants have the right to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales regarding their complaint at any stage of the complaints process, at the address shown below. However the Ombudsman will not normally investigate a complaint unless the Authority's complaints procedure has been exhausted. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into a complaint if a complainant believes that they:
 - Have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the body providing it; or

- Have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

9.2. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales may be contacted:

- In writing to:

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
I Ffordd yr Hen Gae
Pencoed
CF35 5LJ

- By emailing: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- By phone: 0845 601 0987
- By visiting the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' website:
www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk

10. **Complaints Not Covered By This Policy**

- 10.1. This policy does not apply to complaints relating to freedom of information requests. This is because there is a separate process for reviewing requests for information made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- 10.2. Sometimes it may be that there is a statutory right to appeal (e.g. against refusal to grant planning permission) and in such cases Authority's officers will advise you of this statutory right to appeal.
- 10.3. In some circumstances, it may be that the Authority is not the relevant body to deal with your complaint. Subsequently, Authority officers will advise you of the appropriate body to direct your complaint to.

11. **Further Help**

- 11.1. Authority staff will aim to assist complainants to make any concerns known. However, if complainants require further assistance from a body separate to the Authority, Authority staff will help to put complainants in touch with the relevant body that can help.
- 11.2. Complainants under the age of 18 can also use this policy however if assistance is required to use the policy, complainants under the age of 18 can contact:
- The Melic Helpline
Telephone: 080880 23456
Website: www.meiccymru.org

- The Children’s Commissioner for Wales
Telephone: 01792 765 600
Email: post@childcomwales.org.uk
Website: www.childcom.org.uk
- 11.3. Complainants over the age of 60 who require assistance to use this policy, can contact:
- The Older Commissioner For Wales
In writing to: The Older Commissioner for Wales, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Butetown, Cardiff, CF10 5FL
Telephone: 08442 640 670 or 02920 445 030

Compliments

12. Introduction

- 12.1. Feedback is important to the Authority, as the Authority strives to provide a best possible level of service to members of the public.
- 12.2. The Authority would therefore like to know when the public have been impressed or pleased with the service provided by the Authority. Any positive comments received by members of the public are termed ‘compliments’. In this document, the term “compliment” refers to positive feedback or comments deemed by the Authority to be treated as a ‘compliment’. An individual or organisation can submit a compliment to the Authority.
- 12.3. The Authority reviews compliments regularly and details are reported to the Authority’s Audit and Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Management Team. These reports detail information about the number and type of compliments that have been received.

13. How to submit a compliment

- 13.1. Compliments can be submitted to the Authority in any of the following ways:
- By completing the Authority’s ‘Complaints, Compliments and Comments form’, appended to this policy, and submitting the same to the Authority via email to complaintsandcompliments@beacons-npa.gov.uk or enquiries@beacons-npa.gov.uk, or by post to Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Plas y Ffynnon, Cambrian Way, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7HP.
 - In writing to the above email or postal addresses.
- 13.2. The Authority aims to make the ‘Complaints, Compliments and Comments Form’ available at its headquarters at Plas y Ffynnon, Brecon and all Authority

run Information and Visitor Centres. The forms are available in both English and Welsh.

14. **Procedure**

- 14.1. On receipt of the compliment, the Authority will log this within the Authority's central compliments register.
- 14.2. The Authority will then make the Chief Executive Officer, Head of Department and the Authority staff subject of the compliment aware that this has been received.

15. **Outcome**

- 15.1. Compliments received can then be used to thank Authority staff who have provided the commendable service, as well as being shared amongst Authority staff to indicate best practice and further improve the services provided by the Authority.



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Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Complaints, Compliments and Comments Form

Please complete all sections of this form.			
Your details	Name.....		
	Address.....		
		
	Postcode.....		
Your telephone number			
Your email address			
Please tell us how you would like us to contact you (e.g. email, letter, telephone call)			
The best time to contact you			
If you are completing this form on behalf of someone else, please give the name and address of the person wishing to make the complaint, comment or compliment	Name.....		
	Address.....		
		
	Postcode.....		
I would like to make a:	Complaint	Compliment	Comment
Please give details of your complaint, compliment or comment (continue on a separate sheet if necessary)			

Complaints only - How would you like the matter to be put right?	
Complaints only - Have you raised this concern before?	
Complaints only - If yes, please provide brief details of how and when you raised this concern before (including department contacted and name of member of staff)	
Complaints only – If applicable, what was the outcome of this previous concern:	

Signed:.....

Date:.....

(Please return this form to the Complaints Officer, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Brecon, Powys, LD3 7HP or by email to complaintsandcompliments@beacons-npa.gov.uk or enquiries@beacons-npa.gov.uk

For office use only	
Complaint reference number:	
Investigating officer (where applicable):	
Date received:	