



Complaints handling procedure

The Cairngorms National Park Authority 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 how we will handle your complaint and what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- Failure or refusal to provide a service.
- Inadequate quality or standard of service or an unreasonable delay in providing a service.
- Dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual.
- Failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering a service.
- Failure to follow the appropriate administrative process.
- Conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor (except where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves).
- Disagreement with a decision (except where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed).

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.



- Issues that are already in court or have been heard by a court or tribunal. If you decide to take legal action you should let us know as the complaint cannot then be considered under this process.
- Disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, such as planning decisions, freedom of information and subject access requests or an established appeal process.
- Request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information (Scotland) Acts.
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision.
- Abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our organisation or staff where such actions would be covered by our unreasonable demanding correspondence policy.
- A concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue, except where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf.

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 who receives, requests or is directly affected by our services can make a complaint to us. This includes the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service, for example, a relative, friend, advocate or adviser. If you are making a complaint on someone else's behalf, you will normally need their written consent. Please also read the section below on getting help to make your complaint.

How do I complain?

You can complain in person at our office, by phone, in writing, or by e-mail to:

Cairngorms National Park Authority
14 The Square
Grantown-on-Spey
Scotland
PH26 3HG

Tel: 01479 873 535
E-mail: information@cairngorms.co.uk



It is easier for us to address complaints if you make them quickly and indicate which area of our business is concerned. Your complaint can then be passed to a member of staff within the relevant team who will work with us to resolve the issue.

When complaining, please tell us:

- Your full name and contact details
- As much as you can about the complaint
- What has gone wrong
- What outcome you are seeking

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally you must make your complaint within six months of:

- The event you want to complain about.
- Finding out that you have a reason to complain.

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.

What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages.

Stage one – frontline resolution

Where possible, we aim to resolve complaints quickly when you first tell us about the issue.

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 give you our decision at stage one as quickly as possible, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this stage, we will tell you what you can do next. If you choose to, you can take your complaint to stage two. You must normally ask us to consider your complaint at stage two either:

- Within six months of the event you want to complain about or finding out that you have a reason to complain.
- Within two months of receiving your stage one response, if this is later.



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

Stage two – investigation

Stage two deals with three types of complaint:

- Those that have not been resolved at stage one.
- Those that are complex in nature and are immediately apparent that detailed investigation is required.
- Those that involve members of senior management.

If you do not wish your complaint to be handled at stage one, you can ask us to handle it at stage two instead.

When using stage two we will:

- Acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days.
- Where appropriate, discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for.
- To resolve your complaint, where we can, in some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as mediation.
- Where we cannot resolve your complaint, we will give you a full response as soon as possible, normally 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.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

If, having gone through our complaints procedure and given you our final decision, you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO are an independent organisation that investigates complaints. They are not an advocacy or support service (but there are other organisations who can help you with advocacy or support).

You can ask the SPSO to look at your complaint if:

- You have gone all the way through our complaints handling procedure.
- It is less than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about.



- The matter has not been and is not being considered in court.

The SPSO will ask you to complete a complaint form and provide a copy of our final response to your complaint. You can do this by telephone or online at www.spsso.org.uk/complain/form.

If you prefer to visit the SPSO in person you must make an appointment. Their contact details are:

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Bridgeside House
99 McDonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4NS

Freepost address: FREEPOST SPSO
Website: www.spsso.org.uk
Freephone: 0800 377 7330
Online contact: www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Getting help to make your complaint

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

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance. Their contact details are:

Website: www.siaa.org.uk
Tel: 0131 510 9410

You can also find your local Citizens Advice Bureau and advisers through Citizens Advice Scotland:

Website: www.cas.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 guide in Gaelic, another language or format such as large print, audio or Braille please contact us on 01479 873 535, or e-mail information@cairngorms.co.uk.