



The Model Complaints Handling Procedure for the Scottish Government

A Guide for Customers

2014

Forestry Commission Scotland is committed to providing high-quality 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 document describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is 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:

- 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 e.g. notifying us of a poor quality walking route
- requests for compensation
- things that are covered by a right of appeal, for example:
 - rejection of a SRDP grant or a felling licence
 - being unsuccessful in a tender process
 - a refusal under the National Forest Land Scheme

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

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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 by email. See our website for contact details - www.forestry.gov.uk/scotlandcomplaint

When complaining, please 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.

What happens when I have complained?

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

Our complaints procedure has 2 stages:

Stage one – frontline resolution

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 give you our decision at Stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If we can't resolve your complaint at this stage, we will explain why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to Stage 2. You may choose to do this immediately or sometime after you get our initial decision.

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

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- 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.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

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 260 5380

f: 0131 260 5381

Website: www.siaa.org.uk

If you need this publication in an alternative format, for example in large print or in another language, please contact:

The Diversity Team

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Forestry Commission
Silvan House
231 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh EH12 7AT
Tel: 0300 067 5046

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.

What we will and won't tolerate

Customers' reasons for complaining may contribute to the way they present their complaint. Regardless of this, we will treat all complaints seriously and properly assess them. However, we also recognise that the actions of customers who are angry, demanding or persistent may result in unreasonable demands on time and resources or unacceptable behaviour towards staff. FCS will, therefore, apply our policies and procedures to protect staff from unacceptable behaviour.

Contact details

Please contact your nearest office:

Web: www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland

Other ways to contact us:

Forestry Commission Scotland
National Office
Silvan House
231 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh
EH12 7AT

Tel: 0300 067 6156

Email: FCScotland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Web: www.forestry.gov.uk/scotlandcomplaint