



Complaints and Concerns Policy and Procedure

Wildlife Friendly Otley (WFO) views any complaint or concerns received as an opportunity to engage, learn and improve. It is WFO's aim to communicate effectively and put things right for the person (or organisation) raising the complaint or concern.

WFO policy is:

- To provide a fair procedure which is clear and easy to use for any complainant
- To publicise the existence of the procedure so that people know how to contact WFO to raise a complaint or concern
- To make sure that all the Trustees of WFO know what to do if they receive a complaint or concern
- To make sure all complaints or concerns received are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that, wherever possible, complaints are resolved and that relationships are maintained / improved
- To gather information which helps WFO to improve what it does

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of WFO' work – this encompasses both fund raising and field work activities.

Definition of a Concern

A concern is an expression of interest or something of importance to a person (or organisation) which relates to the aims and field work activities of WFO.

Where can a Complaint or Concern come from

Complaints or concerns may come from an individual, member, volunteer or organisation who has a legitimate interest in WFO, this includes the general public if they perceive the activity of WFO to be improper. A complaint can be received verbally, in writing or by email. As all Trustees of WFO are volunteers there is no facility to make a complaint or raise a concern by telephone.

Confidentiality

Any complaint or concern information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Trustees of WFO.

Review

The policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Complaints and Concerns Procedure

Written or verbal complaints or concerns may be handed to or raised with any WFO Trustee when they are at events in the community in Otley.

Complaints or concerns can also be emailed to wildlifefriendlyotley@gmail.com



Receiving a Complaint or Concern

Complaints or concerns may be received via the channels detailed above. If a complaint or concern is made in person the Trustee will record the details, making note of:

- The facts of the complaint or concern
- The name and address of the individual to respond to
- The relationship the individual has to WFO, e.g. donor, volunteer, sponsor, member

The Trustee should also inform the individual that WFO has a Complaints and Concerns Policy and give an indication of how WFO will respond and in what timescale. Where possible the individual should be encouraged to formalise complaints via email, so WFO has the complaint written in the complainant's own words. Every complaint should be acknowledged within 5 days and the complainant kept informed of progress until the matter is concluded. (See below ref to 14 days)

Resolving Complaints

STAGE 1

In many cases any complaint or concern raised is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue concerned. If the complaint or concern is received by a Trustee is about them or the work they are involved in they should seek to resolve it swiftly if possible and appropriate. Whether or not the complaint is resolved at this time the information should be passed to the Chair of WFO prior to the next Committee Meeting.

On receiving a complaint or concern, the WFO Secretary will make an electronic record in accordance with GDPR standards . If it has not already been resolved, the WFO Secretary will delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. If the complaint relates to a specific person carrying out work on behalf of WFO they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints will be acknowledged by the Trustee with responsibility to investigate and respond within 5 days. The acknowledgment should say who is dealing with the complaint; when a response can be expected and direction to this policy on WFO website. Accepting all WFO Trustees undertake all aspects of work on a voluntary basis, the aim is to provide a definitive response within 30 days. If this is not possible, an update will be given to the complainant with a estimated timescale for completion.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusion of the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

STAGE 2

If the complainant feels the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at STAGE 1, they can request that the case is reviewed by the WFO Trustee Committee.

At this stage, the complaint will be discussed at the next Trustee Committee meeting. The Secretary will acknowledge that the information will be shared with the Trustees of WFO. The Chair will decide who will re-investigate the complaint and will inform the complainant who this is and when they can expect a response. The Chair or Secretary may decide to take lead investigator at this stage depending on the nature of the complaint.



The review will involve reviewing all the paperwork and correspondence and speaking to the person who dealt with the complaint at STAGE 1; this person will be kept informed throughout the process.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive response within 30 days. If, at this stage this is not possible, the complainant will be informed and a revised timescale for response will be set. Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate their complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of their complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Trustees decide it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

External STAGE

As WFO is a registered charity, the complainant can complain to the Charities Commission. Information about the kind of complaints the Charities Commission can involve itself with can be found at: www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The WFO Trustees may vary the procedure for defined good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, a complaint about the Chair or a specific Trustee should not have the Chair or specific Trustee involved as lead investigator.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

WFO Trustees will review all complaints and concerns received annually and the number and any emergent themes will be detailed in the Annual Report.

Author: Helen Hey, WFO Trustee, March 2022.

Reviewed River Six, WFO Trustee, September 2023.