



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Interim Environmental
Governance Secretariat



Department of
Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

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Our Customer Charter (IEGS)

January 2021

Before the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) becomes operational **the IEGS** will receive and validate your complaints against public authorities if you believe that they have failed to comply with environmental law as provided under the Environment Bill. We do not have statutory powers to investigate or make enforcement decisions. We will, however, transfer all complaints we receive to the OEP, once it is operational. This will allow the OEP to consider such complaints itself and investigate them further if it considers that appropriate.

This charter explains what you can expect from us when you ask us to look at your complaint and what we need from you in return.

How we look at your complaint

Please read our external complaint procedure which explains what will happen when you contact us, and how we will validate your complaint before passing it on to the OEP.

Our commitments

Giving you the information you need

When we communicate with you, we will:

1. be prompt in responding to your phone calls and correspondence, acknowledging written correspondence as soon as practical and normally within 10 working days, and returning missed calls as soon as we reasonably can;
2. explain our role and what we can and cannot do;
3. explain how we handle complaints and what information we need from you;

4. direct you to someone who can help with your complaint if we are unable to, where possible;
5. keep you updated on our progress with your complaint;
6. write to you in simple and clear language and avoid using technical terms as far as possible.

Following an open and fair process

We will:

7. carefully read through your complaint to make sure we fully understand it and may contact you if we need further details or clarification;
8. gather all the information we need, including from you and the public authority you have complained about;
9. evaluate the information we've gathered and make an initial, impartial assessment on the validity of your complaint to determine if we think it will fall within the remit of the OEP;
10. inform you of the outcome of our initial assessment and next steps including passing on your complaint and related materials to the OEP.

Giving you a good service

We will:

11. treat you with courtesy and respect;
12. be open and transparent in providing an outcome of our initial assessment on your complaint as soon as we reasonably can;
13. try to give you support and help if you need it;
14. look after the information you give us, within our guidelines.

Equality / Diversity / Disability

15. We commit to dealing with you without discrimination or prejudice.
16. We will respect equality and human rights in accordance with Public Sector Duty principles.
17. We will aim to have our services easily available and as accessible to you as reasonably possible.

Living up to our commitments

We will:

18. listen to your feedback and use it to improve our service;
19. apologise if we make mistakes, and aim to put things right as far as reasonably possible.

What we expect from you when you complain to us

We need you to:

20. complain to the public authority you are unhappy with first, so it has a chance to consider the issue and put things right if it agrees there has been a failure;
21. state your complaint as clearly and as you can in plain English;
22. quote the Unique ID number we assign to your complaint in all communications with us about it;
23. treat our staff with courtesy and respect;
24. respond to requests for information in a reasonable amount of time;
25. tell us if you have any particular needs that we should be aware of and advise us how we can best help you.

Improving our Customer Charter and Service

26. We will listen to people who have used our service and to public authorities in considering improvements to this charter and our service.

Our contact

Please contact us if you have any feedback or would like to make further enquiries about this charter on IEGSEnquiries@defra.gov.uk