



Bethnal Green Nature Reserve Trust

External Complaints Policy

Last Updated: 1 May 2024

1. ABOUT THIS POLICY

The Bethnal Green Nature Reserve Trust (the **Trust**) views external third-party complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve, as well as a chance to put right any of our wrongdoings for those affected. As such, we are committed to providing a clear, fair, and timely procedure to deal with any such complaints made against the Trust.

This document sets out the procedure to be followed by our team in handling a complaint made by an external third party (e.g. a member of the public). Our policy is to:

- Provide an accessible and clear complaints procedure for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- Publicise the existence of this complaint's procedure.
- Ensure everyone at the Trust knows how to properly receive and handle a complaint.
- Make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and properly, in a timely manner.
- Where possible, to resolve all complaints and ensure relationships are maintained.
- Improve our operations using information gathered from feedback.

2. EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS

An external complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of the Trust by a third party (e.g. a member of the public).

3. MAKING A COMPLAINT

- 3.1. A complaint may be made by any third party, such as a member of the public. All staff, trustees, and volunteers of the Trust can raise complaints and grievances through the [Internal Grievance Handling Policy](#).
- 3.2. An external complaint can be submitted by email using the contact details in section 10 below.
- 3.3. In addition, a verbal complaint can be made in person to any of Trust's staff, volunteers, or trustees at the site.

4. RECEIVING COMPLAINTS

- 4.1 Complaints received by email must detail:
- A. The nature of the complaint.
 - B. The complainant's name, address, and telephone number.
 - C. The complainant's relationship to the Trust (i.e. how they came into contact with the Trust).
- 4.2 Complaints received verbally need to be recorded to allow for effective investigation. This will involve the recipient of the complaint:
- A. Writing the facts of the complaint.
 - B. Writing the complainant's name, address, and telephone number.
 - D. Noting the complainant's relationship to the Trust (i.e. how they came into contact with the Trust).
 - C. Informing the complainant about the Trust's complaints procedure.
 - D. Explaining the steps the Trust will take regarding the complainant, and the likely duration of the process.
 - E. Where appropriate, asking the complainant to provide a written account of the complaint.
 - F. Communicating the complaint to the relevant personnel internally as set out in 5.2 below.

5. STAGE 1: INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- 5.1 A complaint can often be resolved promptly and satisfactorily by contacting the person most directly involved in the circumstances surrounding the complaint. Where a complaint is particularly sensitive or complex, it may be appropriate to proceed immediately to Stage Two of the complaint's resolution procedure.
- 5.2 Within five (5) working days of lodging the complaint, the General Staff and Volunteer Line Manager (Michael Smythe – see contact details in Section 10) should be made aware of the information surrounding the complaint by the initial recipient of the complaint.
- 5.3 On receiving the complaint, the General Staff and Volunteer Line Manager will log the complaint in the complaints log. If the complaint remains unresolved, they shall further investigate the matter.
- 5.4 Where a complaint relates to a specific person, they must be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.
- 5.5 The Trust will seek to fully resolve the complaint and issue a definitive reply within a month of the date of the complaint.
- 5.6 If it is not possible to reach a determination within a month, for instance where an investigation remains ongoing, frequent progress reports must be issued to relevant parties, including information as to predicted timescales. When the investigation concludes, a definitive reply must be swiftly sent to the parties concerned.

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

6 STAGE TWO OF THE COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION PROCEDURE (formal resolution):

6.1 If the complainant feels the matter cannot be, or has not been, appropriately dealt with through the Stage One outlined above, a formal complaint should be submitted in writing to the trust Chair (Sajida Malik) and/or the designated Human Resources Trustee (Oliver Grazebrook) - 'the recipient'.

6.2 The recipient of the complaint must acknowledge receipt within five (5) working days. The acknowledgment should state who will deal the complaint, and how quickly the complainant can expect a resolution.

6.3 The complaint may be dealt with by the recipient themselves, or they may delegate the handling and investigation of the complaint to another suitably senior person or a suitable third party organisation.

6.4 The investigation may involve reviewing the paperwork produced during the course of the Stage One investigation, and speaking with the person who conducted this initial investigation.

6.5 Where the complaint relates to a specific person, they must be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

6.6 The Trust will seek to fully resolve the dispute and issue a definitive reply within a month of the start of the Stage Two process.

6.7 If it is not possible to reach a determination within a month, for instance where an investigation remains ongoing, frequent progress reports must be issued to relevant parties, including information as to predicted timescales. When the investigation concludes, a definitive reply must be swiftly sent to the parties concerned.

6.8 The decision granted at this stage will be final, unless the complainant can demonstrate that they have grounds for appeal.

7 STAGE THREE OF THE COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION PROCEDURE (appeal):

7.1 It may be possible to appeal a decision made under Stage 2 of the procedure, where the complainant can prove the decision was flawed by:

- A lack of procedural fairness. This may be the case where an administrative error, perception of bias, or procedural irregularity has led to a material disadvantage for the complainant.
- New evidence, or previously unavailable evidence. The appeal must explain why this evidence was not disclosed earlier.
- A manifestly unreasonable decision. The appeal must evidence that the decision reached through the Stage Two procedure was not one that a similar process of consideration might have reached.

- 7.2 Any appeal submitted must clearly demonstrate how the grounds of appeal apply. The burden of proof is on the person making the appeal to demonstrate that the original outcome is no longer appropriate.
- 7.3 All evidence must be presented with the appeal submission.
- 7.4 Appeal submissions must be made, in writing, to the Trust Chair (Sajida Malik). If the Chair, in consultation with the other Trustees, believes the appeal to be justified according to the limited criteria set out above, the Trust shall repeat the Stage Two process, making such adjustments to the process as are required to address the complainant's concerns as set out in the appeal.

8 STAGE FOUR OF THE COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION PROCEDURE (complaints to a regulator):

A complaint can be made about the Trust to the Charity Commission at any stage. Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on its website.

9 GENERAL

- 9.1 The Trust reserves the right to vary the external complaints procedure outlined above where there is good reason to do so. This may be necessary to avoid conflicts of interest, or to best facilitate a timely investigation into a complaint.
- 9.2 The Trust reviews this External Complaints Policy on a regular basis.
- 9.3 All complaint information will be handled sensitively, following any relevant data protection requirements.

10 CONTACT

Trust Chair: Sajida Malik – trustees@bethnalgreennaturereserve.org

Human Resources Trustee: Oliver Grazebrook - grazebrook@gmail.com

General staff and volunteer line manager: Michael Smythe -

info@bethnalgreennaturereserve.org

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, at least once a year. The Trust will amend this policy, following review, where appropriate.