

HOW WE RESPOND TO FEEDBACK & COMPLAINTS: RSPB COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Statement of purpose:

The purpose of this policy, and our procedures for listening to our supporters and addressing feedback, is to improve what we do and to maintain and build our relationship with all those on whom the RSPB depends and with whom we engage. While we always want to provide excellent service, we want to find out about things that have gone wrong so we can fix them (on the spot, if we can), and prevent those things going wrong in the future, while providing a consistent, transparent and continually developing service to all our stakeholders. This policy will be reviewed and amended regularly.

Scope of the policy

This policy covers:

- Feedback about the RSPB's governance, mission, values, strategy, objectives, policies, decisions, activities, quality, performance and behaviour;
- Feedback from all our stakeholders – individuals, groups and communities, members, supporters, partners, suppliers and the wider public.

This policy does not cover:

- Feedback & complaints from staff and volunteers – this is covered by other policies;
- Contractual disputes;
- Comments made in the media or by similar third parties;
- Requests for information (including Subject Access Requests under the Data Protection Act), or to amend records.

How we listen to you

To help us build our relationship with our supporters, learn from your suggestions and provide opportunities for you to engage with us, we want to encourage your feedback. We have an active programme of engagement, from formal events such as our AGM and Members Day, Members Weekend, and through our Local Members Groups, to daily face to-face contact. We listen carefully to the feedback you give us through whichever means, including traditional media and emerging social media applications. We have an active market research programme to help us find out what you think, including surveys, interviews and focus groups. In the future, as the technology becomes more affordable to us and more widely used, we will look at techniques such as online polling, panels, and live-streamed events.

Some feedback requires a formal response: this document explains how we do that.

What is a complaint and what is a comment?

All feedback will be treated with courtesy and respect, and handled sensitively within an appropriate timescale¹, involving only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements. The RSPB expects people who provide feedback to do so fairly and appropriately.

We also receive many comments – suggestions, or expressions of satisfaction or dissatisfaction: these are also opportunities for organisational learning, and a record is normally kept, however while we will normally respond to or acknowledge comments, the response is not part of a formal process.

A complaint is a formal claim that the RSPB has failed to meet an organisational commitment as set out in the RSPB Charter & Statutes and Annual Trustees' Report & Accounts, a relevant Code of Practice, law or a regulation. A complaint requires an investigation, a formal response and a record. It also provides an opportunity for organisational learning. Complaints about safety standards will be handled in a similar way to other feedback, but with the involvement of our Safety Advisors. Concern regarding the behaviour of RSPB staff or volunteers will also be treated as a complaint, using our HR policies and procedures: in such cases, the detail of any outcome may need to remain confidential.

Since investigating a complaint makes use of the RSPB's limited resources, we expect the person making the complaint to:

- Provide sufficient information for us to be able to understand the complaint, its cause, and a potential resolution, being clear as to the substance of the complaint;
- Be willing to be contacted and engage in the complaints process if necessary;
- Understand that making a complaint triggers a more formal process than a comment.

Feedback provided by or concerning a person under the age of 18 will be dealt with in the strictest confidence and in accordance with the RSPB's Safeguarding Policy, and a member of the Safeguarding steering group may need to be involved.

Feedback provided anonymously will be taken into account and used as an opportunity to learn: we cannot respond to anonymous feedback.

We may choose not to respond to feedback that:

- Is abusive, prejudiced or offensive;
- Harasses a member of staff or a volunteer;
- Seeks to bypass stages in the complaints procedure;
- Is repeatedly stated in a manner not conducive to resolution;
- Concerns something that the RSPB has no direct connection to: we may choose to respond to clear our name, but we are not obliged to;
- Is incoherent or illegible;
- Has clearly been sent to the RSPB and a number of other organisations as part of a bulk communication: in such cases the RSPB will choose whether or not it is necessary to reply;

¹ There are defined timescales for complaints made directly by certain regulatory bodies, including the Fundraising Regulator, the Information Commissioner's Office, the Telephone Preference Service etc.

- Unreasonably pursues a complaint that we have already responded to or pursues a line of enquiry to the point it becomes vexatious. Escalation points in our complaints procedure are provided. If we choose not to reply again, we will inform you of this decision.

How you can contact us

You can call us on 01767 693680. One of our Supporter Advisors will be ready and willing to help. Our phone lines are open Monday to Friday between 09:00 and 17:00

You can email us via our website www.rspb.org.uk/contactus

Or you can write to us at:

RSPB Supporter Services
The Lodge
Potton Road
Sandy
Bedfordshire
SG19 2DL

Please provide your name, address and contact telephone number if you email or write to us so that we can get in touch with you easily. While we will normally respond to you via the same method you choose to use to contact us, we find that the best way to resolve a problem speedily is by telephone, since we can gather all the information needed to understand the issue in full by this means.

When contacting us, please feel free to let us know how you think the matter could be resolved: your ideas and suggestions are always very helpful to us.

We also listen hard to comments made in other forums, including our own online discussion forums, and we may contact individuals directly as a result.

Sometimes feedback is given in person. Our aim is to resolve the issue on the spot, but we recognise that that is not always possible. Since we want to ensure we handle all feedback appropriately and comprehensively, whether it is a complaint of a comment, and with courtesy and respect, in such cases the person who receives it should:

- Write down the facts;
- Take a note of the person's name, address, email, and telephone number (double check these details are recorded correctly);
- Take a note of any action requested;
- Note down the relationship of the person to the RSPB (for example, member, supplier, partner etc.);
- Inform the person that we have a complaints policy on our website, which can also be obtained from RSPB Supporter Services in printed form on request;
- Tell the person that their feedback or complaint will be forwarded to Supporter Services who will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days. Explain that a full response can sometimes take longer but this will be made known in the acknowledgement;
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words;
- Record the date the feedback was received, the person who received it, the person to whom it was assigned, and any immediate actions taken.

What we will do

We will work hard to fix problems, correct mistakes and address concerns. Wherever possible, the complaint should be resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint is received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. However, in every case the complaint information will be passed to the Supporter Services department within five working days. The staff in our Supporter Services team have been trained to handle feedback in an efficient, respectful and professional way. Often, they will need to take advice from, or pass a matter on to, a colleague elsewhere in the organisation.

We will keep a record of the complaint in order to:

- Monitor the progress of the complaint;
- Provide evidence that the complaint was considered, and the information about the outcome;
- Identify trends or recurring themes;
- Compile reports, including statistical data for our regulators.

Complaints can have different levels of priority, depending on the risk the issue highlighted might pose. The speed and detail with which an investigation is pursued may be influenced by the priority accorded to it.

How long it will take

We aim to acknowledge all feedback within ten working days and reply to complaints within one month. Sometimes further investigation is required to enable us to respond: if we think that this is the case, we will contact you to let you know this and explain how long we think it will take before we can reply in full.

If you are not satisfied

We will do our best to ensure that any person making a complaint is satisfied with the way we handle it. However, if you are not satisfied, then you can write a letter of appeal to the Supporter Relations & Experience Manager within one month of receiving our written response, outlining the details of the complaint, why you are not satisfied with our response and what you would like us to do to put things right.

The Supporter Relations & Experience Manager will reconsider the information already collected, re-investigate if necessary, consider your appeal and what further action may be taken and will reply to you within twenty-one days. If the Supporter Relations & Experience Manager does not undertake this appeal in person, then it will be conducted by someone more senior than the individual who considered the initial complaint.

Following this stage, if you are still not satisfied, you should write directly to the Chair of RSPB Council², who will assign responsibility for a further review to a senior member of staff (with the advice of RSPB Management Board) and will examine the review. You will be notified of the progress and outcome of this final review.

² Letters of complaint sent directly to the Chair of Council without prior investigation & response will be handled in line with this policy and passed to supporter Services to make the initial contact.

If you remain unsatisfied after all three stages have been completed, there is no further right of appeal within the RSPB. However, if you are still dissatisfied, you can pursue your complaint with an external body.

Complaints about fundraising activities

The RSPB is registered with the Fundraising Regulator. The RSPB is committed to the highest standards in fundraising practice and the regulator's [fundraising promise](#)

If your complaint relates to fundraising and you feel it remains unresolved then the fundraising regulator can investigate your complaint.

Fundraising Regulator
2nd Floor CAN Mezzanine Building
49-51 East Road
London
N1 6AH

0300 999 3407

www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk

Complaints about Fundraising in Scotland

If you live in Scotland and do not wish to follow the Fundraising Regulator process you may wish to contact the Scottish Fundraising Standards Panel at <https://www.goodfundraising.scot/>

Or call 0808 164 2520 or email: info@goodfundraising.scot

Please contact [Scottish Charity Regulator \(OSCR\)](#) if you feel you are not satisfied with the way the RSPB has dealt with your complaint.

Who else can help

If your complaint is related to another area of our work and you do not feel satisfied with our response, then you can contact the Charity Commission:

Charity Commission
PO Box 1227
Liverpool
L69 3UG

0845 3000218

www.charity-commission.gov.uk

The RSPB is also registered as a cross-border charity in Scotland, The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) can be contacted at the following address:

FAO Investigation Officers OSCR
2nd Floor Quadrant House
9 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

01382 220446

<http://www.oscr.org.uk/>

There are many bodies that help individuals take up issues with charities. These include the Charity Commission (as above), the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, the Information Commissioner's Office, Trading Standards, and Companies House: these will often recommend that issues are raised with the organisation concerned first, before escalation to them.

Reviewed January 2020