

REPORT OF MONITORING OFFICER

SUBJECT: COMPLAINTS HANDLING

1. The Authority's Complaints procedure is contained in its booklet "Service Standards – comments and complaints".
2. The procedure enables members of the public to make complaints about the Authority. This is available both in hard copy at all the Authority's offices and electronically on the Authority's website.
3. The process of Complaints handling has been the subject of policy guidance from both the Welsh Government and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales over the last two years. It is regarded as part of its wider agenda to reform the delivery and accountability of public service providers.
4. The Administration and Democratic Services Manager and I attended a conference in Cardiff in February 2013 whereby all public bodies were urged to adopt the Welsh Government's Complaints Policy which had been prepared on an all-Wales and all public service providers basis, as appropriate for themselves.
5. An analysis of the Authority's Service Standards policy revealed that it had already adopted the principal suggested changes, some as long ago as 2007. However, as part of an ongoing review, it was felt some additional changes were now needed to improve it.
6. Authority was delegated in January 2007 to the Standards Committee to monitor the Authority's Complaints Procedure, and it was considered by this Committee in October 2007 and latterly in August 2013. The Service Standards policy has been periodically updated in the past, to reflect the changing legislative and ethical environment in local government in general and the policies, practices and procedures of the Authority in particular.
7. On 21st August 2013, the Standards Committee considered a report from myself on the introduction of a 12 month cut off rule with regard to complaints being made. It recommended that such a time limit be introduced and, as part of that process, it was also felt that the Booklet itself should be revised when incorporating this change.
8. For ease of reference, the text of the booklet is appended and in it I have suggested the amendments coloured red. They principally include the following insertions:

(a) "Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within 12 months of the perceived incident. We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this, however you will need to give us good reasons why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to enable us to consider it properly."

(b) "We aim to resolve concerns within 20 working days. If your complaint is more complex we will let you know within this period why we think it may take longer to investigate. At the conclusion of the investigation into your complaint we will explain how and why the investigator has come to his/her conclusions."

There are some consequential amendments that I have also incorporated into the booklet to clarify the current two stage procedure.

9. Recommendation

That the proposed changes to the Service Standards booklet contained in appendix 1 be adopted.

Background papers.

Standard Committee minutes of meeting 21 August 2013¹

Complaints Wales Group –Proposals for Model concerns and complaints policy for adoption by Public Service providers in Wales.²

Guidance for Public service providers on implementing the Model concerns and complaints policy³

The Authority's current Service Standards booklet.⁴

(For further information, please contact John Parsons)

Author: John Parsons

Consultees: PCNPA Leadership Team

¹ Standards Committee Minutes August 3013

² Insert weblinks

³ "

⁴ "

Service Standards

comments & complaints

Our Service Commitment

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority is committed to providing a high standard of service to all its customers - but we want to know when things go wrong.

We can learn from your experience - if you think that we have failed to do something or that we have done something badly, or you have a suggestion for improving services then it's important that you tell us about it.

We want you to feel free to contact us with any comments or suggestions. By doing this you will enable us to put things right and improve the service. This does not affect the statutory rights whereby an applicant for planning approval can ask the **Welsh Government** to consider their case if they think we have made the wrong decision or we have not given a decision within an 8 week period.

Service Standards

Our staff are committed to giving you a high standard of service. They will deal with your enquiries politely and quickly and they will meet the standards set out in in this booklet, which is available in Information Centres or the National Park Office, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock, Pembrokeshire. **Tel. 0845 345 7275**.

Definition of Dissatisfaction

Anyone who has had contact with the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority can express dissatisfaction about the following:

- the behaviour/actions of members of **the Authority or its** staff;
- the standard of service provided **by the Authority** or the manner in which it was provided;
- lack of appropriate action or failure to deal with the matter quickly enough.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within 12 months of the perceived incident. We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this, however you will need to give us good reasons why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to enable us to consider it properly.

What to do

Contact us either by telephone, by visiting the National Park Office , by writing to us or by email.

Telephoning

You can telephone the National Park **Authority's Customer Contact Centre** on **0845 345 7275**.

If you have already had contact with the service and have ongoing correspondence you can telephone direct, quoting the letter reference.

If you prefer not to speak to the office, you can telephone the Chairman or any Member of the National Park Authority (see list of Members on Page 4)

You can also ask a friend, relative or a representative to telephone on your behalf.

Comment [JP1]: Also need to include our (01646) number...some local people worry that PCNPA is generating an income from our 0845 number (which obviously isn't the case).

Comment [JP2]: Also need to include our (01646) number...some local people worry that PCNPA is generating an income from our 0845 number (which obviously isn't the case).

Visit the National Park Office

If you prefer you can visit the National Park office or ask a friend, relative or representative to visit us on your behalf in order to make the complaint or suggestion. The office is located at Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock. If you are unfamiliar with the area the location map inside the front cover will assist you.

Write to the National Park Authority

You can write to us if you prefer by detailing your concerns in a letter, **an e-mail** or by completing the attached form. **We are happy to communicate with you in Welsh or English.** Please remember that we can only deal with complaints that are about our services and/or our **Members or employees**.

Comment [JP3]: ...and contractors working on behalf of PCNPA?

Please feel free to suggest what we might do to solve the problem, and tell us how we may contact you.

Send your letter to:
The Chief Executive (National Park Officer),
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority,
Service Standards,
FREEPOST HV77,
Pembroke Dock
SA72 6YZ

E-mail: info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

What happens next?

We will acknowledge your communication **or visit** within three working days and tell you the name and telephone number of the person dealing with it. **We aim to resolve concerns within 20 working days. If your complaint is more complex we will let you know within this period why we think it may take longer to investigate. At the conclusion of the investigation into your complaint we will explain how and why the investigator has come to his/her conclusions.**

What if I feel that the outcome is unsatisfactory?

If you feel that the matter has not been dealt with properly or you are unhappy with the reply, then you can ask the National Park **Authority's** Monitoring Officer to investigate your case.

In doing so, you do not in any way affect your right of taking your complaint to the Ombudsman if you remain dissatisfied.

The Monitoring Officer is an independent adjudicator. At this stage you will have an opportunity to make any points which you feel have not been properly considered. The Monitoring Officer will let you have a copy of his Report which will contain details of his decision and any recommendations. In addition the Monitoring Officer periodically informs the Authority/Standards Committee of the existence and nature of his Reports. If you need help in making your complaint or concerns known to the Authority you can telephone our Customer Contact Centre team on 0845 345 7275 who will connect you with a senior officer who will be able to assist you.

Bringing a complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (“the Ombudsman”)

The law provides that the Ombudsman may investigate a matter once he is satisfied that:

- (a) the matter has been brought to the attention of the Authority, and
- (b) the Authority has been given a reasonable opportunity to investigate the complaint and respond to it.

These requirements will have been met once you have received a formal response in writing from the Authority in answer to your complaint or the Authority has been given a reasonable time to respond to your complaint but has failed to do so. Your option and right to go direct to the Ombudsman is available as from that stage.

Please note that the Ombudsman has the discretion to investigate a complaint even if these requirements have not been met – if the Ombudsman is satisfied that it would be reasonable for him to do so in the particular circumstances.

If you wish to contact the Ombudsman, will you kindly note the following details:

Ombudsman

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd Yr Hen Gae
Pencoed CF35 5LJ

Email: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
Telephone enquiry number: 0845 601 0987
(Calls to this number are charged at local call rate)
Fax Number: 01656 641199
Website address: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Please remember our commitment

If you feel we have done something wrong or badly or that there has been a long delay in dealing with any matter, please tell us about it. Only by doing this can we put matters right and acknowledge any mistake on our part. This will also enable us to improve our services for the benefit of everyone.

COMPLAINT FORM

Your details

Name:			
Address and Post Code:			
Telephone*:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mobile number*:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E-mail address*:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

* Please indicate by which of the above methods you would prefer us to contact you.

The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please fill in the following section. Please note that before taking forward the complaint we will need to satisfy ourselves that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person concerned.

Making a complaint on behalf of someone else: Their details

Their name:	
Address and Post Code:	
What is your relationship with them?	
Why are you making a complaint on their behalf?	

About your concern/complaint (please continue on a separate sheet(s) if necessary)

Details of your concern/complaint:

What could be done to remedy the problem or issue?

Have you already raised the issue with the person(s) concerned? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so:

If it is more than 12 months since you first became aware of the problem, please give the reason why you have not complained before now:

If you have any documents to support your concern/complaint, please attach them to this form.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return the form to:

Administration and Democratic Services Manager
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
[New Freepost address]

(Please do not electronically print this address on your envelope/label)

Alternatively, you can e-mail it to memberservices@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

Please note the following important information

Data Protection

The information you provide will only be held for the purposes of processing and administration and will not be passed to any other organisation. However, in order to investigate any concern you may have, we may need to divulge your information to other Authority staff. This will only be done where absolutely necessary. Should you refer your complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, then information must by law be provided to them on request.

Freedom of Information

Any correspondence received by the Authority may be subject to a Freedom of Information request. Where appropriate, the Authority will try and maintain anonymity.

For internal use only	
Date received:	
Received by:	
Date acknowledged:	
To be actioned by:	
Date response sent:	