

Renewable World Complaint Policy and Complaints Handling Process February 2016

Document Status

Approved by Renewable World Board 22nd March 2016.

Policy Statement

Renewable World is a small charity working closely with our partners and communities to deliver renewable energy solutions and associated work. Whilst we have a history of very few complaints and expect very few in the future we aim to resolve any complaints in line with the principles below.

This policy applies to Renewable World and is global in application. A complaint can be made by any supporter, partner organisation, community or individual with whom we work or any member of our staff or of the public, whether an individual, company or other entity in the United Kingdom or anywhere else in the world.

Ensuring that our stakeholders can hold us to account will improve the quality of our work. Renewable World (henceforth known as 'RW') strives to be excellent in all that it does but recognises that this cannot always be the case. When we make a mistake we want and need to be informed. We will use the information to endeavour to put things right and to help us to become more effective.

RW is committed to ensuring the accessibility of its Complaints Policy, procedures and systems for making a complaint, across the breadth of our work.

Definitions

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standards of service, actions or lack of action by RW or its staff, volunteers or anybody directly involved in the delivery of our work. It is a criticism that expects a reply and would like things to be changed.

Complaints could include the following (which is not an exhaustive list):

- Concern from someone we work with about the quality of programme delivery.
- Concern from a member of the public or supporter about a particular fundraising approach or campaign.
- Concern about the behaviour or staff, volunteers or contractors.

A complaint has to be about an action for which RW is responsible or is within our sphere of influence.

A complaint is not:

- A general query about RW's work or seeking clarification of a written or verbal statement
- A request for information
- A contractual dispute
- A request to amend records e.g. to correct an address, cancel a donation
- A request to unsubscribe from an RW 'service' e.g. a campaign newsletter or email.

Principles

Accessibility

Complainants should be able to make a complaint as easily as possible: written correspondence, email, telephone, verbally, via a third party, etc. We are committed to making communication with us as easy as possible

Timeliness

RW aims to resolve complaints within 15 working days of receipt. In the event that a complaint cannot be resolved within this timeframe the complainant will be informed about the progress made to date and when they can expect to receive a response. Complaints should be made within 3 months of the relevant incident. In exceptional circumstances RW may be able to respond to a complaint that is older, although the passage of time may make it harder to resolve the complaint satisfactorily.

Confidentiality

Some complaints need to be kept confidential in order to safeguard those making or involved in the complaint. However, in some instances we might judge that the complainant will be better served if others are involved in the resolution of a complaint. Third parties will only be included in the resolution of confidential complaints on a case-by-case basis and with the agreement of the complainant.

Documented

Some complaints may be both made and resolved verbally, e.g. by telephone or face to face. Where they are unable to be resolved verbally, complaints must be made in writing. Outside the UK you may need assistance to do this, and RW will help you to present your complaint.

Right to appeal

Complainants who have launched a well-founded complaint and who are unsatisfied with RW's response to that complaint have the right to appeal. Appropriate appeal processes are outlined in the documents published with this policy.

After an appeal

After the internal appeal, there is no further internal process. You may however still contact our UK Regulator, The Charity Commission. Outside the UK, we will notify you if there is an external procedure, but in any event you may contact the Charity Commission.

Mutual respect

Everyone who makes a complaint to RW will be treated with courtesy and respect. In return, RW expects people who make a complaint to communicate their concerns fairly and appropriately. Where complainants harass staff, behave abusively, or unreasonably pursue complaints, RW reserves the right to withdraw or modify its complaints process.

Part of a learning process

We will log and monitor all complaints and the results of such complaints. Following a complaint, the Chief Operating Officer (as owner of this policy) will convene a meeting with appropriate managers to decide how RW will apply lessons learned, if any. This information will be brought, regularly, and at least annually, to the Senior Management Team (SMT) in order that we learn from what we do and how we do it. This information will not necessarily be available to the public.

A submission of the complaints log will also be made annually to RW's Senior Management Team and Ethics & Sustainability Committee of the Board; the committee will include consideration and comment on the application of lessons learned from previous years' submissions.

Annexes

Annex 1: General Complaints Handling Procedures

Annex 1 General complaints handling procedures:

1. Receiving and recording

There are several ways you can register a complaint:

- Send a letter to Renewable World: Address: Community Base, 113 Queens Road, Brighton, BN1 3XG
- Contact us on 01273 234801 during office hours from 9.00am –5.00pm Mon to Fri OR
- Send an email to getintouch@renewable-world.org

We record the following information on receipt, to ensure complaints are responded to promptly and that relevant information is captured to assist with business improvement.

- the supporter's contact details
- a copy of the letter and/or documentation received
- specific issues complained about
- any action requested
- date the complaint was received
- the person assigned who will prepare the response
- any immediate action to taken

It will be possible to track the complaint through the practice, and for updates to be provided on request, or at pre-determined times.

2. Acknowledgement

Within 15 working days of receiving a complaint we will send you either:

- a) A final response which adequately addresses the complaint; or
- b) A response which:
 - Explains why we are still not in a position to make a final response, giving reasons for the further delay and indicating when we expect to be able to provide a final response; and
 - Informs you that you may refer the handling of the complaint to another organisation or Renewable World contact if you are dissatisfied with the delay.

All complaints will be recorded promptly on our internal database system. A record of complaints is maintained:

- to monitor the progress of a complaint
- to provide evidence that the complaint was considered and of the outcome
- to identify trends or recurring themes in complaints cases
- to compile reports on complaints.

Prompt recording ensures that reports can be created from the system and sent to senior managers which are accurate and reflect the real-time position. Accurate and prompt recording also helps us to comply with certain obligations and requirements.

3. Assessing the complaint

a) Assess and Assign

- We will assess your complaint to determine the best way to deal with it.

- We will assign a specific individual to be responsible for dealing with your complaint.
- We will identify the issues to be investigated.

b) Investigate

- We will work with you to understand the cause of the complaint you have raised.
- We may need to contact you during this time and your cooperation will be important in order to complete the investigation.

4. Taking action

The action taken will depend on the outcome of the assessment stage. Once the decision has been made to investigate the complaint, an investigation plan would be agreed and implemented.

a) Gathering evidence

- Establish and document the facts;

b) Timeframes

- The complaint's complexity will drive the required time for investigating a complaint.

c) Recording & Storing information

- Document any steps taken to investigate the complaint.
- A copy of any documents relied upon for resolving the complaint.

5. Resolving the complaint

a) Resolving complaints informally by speaking directly to the Supporter: The objective of an informal approach is to resolve the matter with a minimum of conflict or distress.

b) Resolving complaints formally, options:

- an apology where the complaint is justified
- fixing the specific problem
- improving the aspect of service that led to the problem

6. Providing feedback

Responding to the complaint

- A detailed written response describing the details of the complaint
- Comments addressing each of the violations alleged in the complaint
- Outline the investigations undertaken to consider the complaint
- Stating the findings resulting from the investigation
- An admission or denial of the allegations
- Justification or rationale for our actions
- Explain any improvements made as a result of the complaint

7. Closing the complaint

Where the proposed decision or action is accepted by the supporter, then the decision or actions will be carried out and recorded.

8. Dealing with unresolved complaints

If you are not satisfied with the response, you can request escalation of the complaint to senior management. This notification should be made in writing. Details required in the notification are:

- Your name and contact details
- A short summary of the issue and actions relevant to the complaint;
- Staff members involved in the issue;
- The action that you are seeking to resolve the complaint. It is essential the desired outcome is clearly stated to ensure there are no misunderstandings regarding expectations.

9. Appeal process

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the decisions regarding your complaint, you can request an internal review of a complaint decision.

- The complaint/appeal should be made in writing.
- The written complaint should set out briefly: the nature of the complaint/appeal, the steps already taken; details of the response received; and a statement as to why you remain dissatisfied and; without prejudice to any remedy which you are still seeking.
- The Ethics & Sustainability Committee will have oversight of the complaints and appeals process and will, specifically, ensure that the person conducting the appeal will be more senior than the person who conducted the first investigation.
- The internal reviewer will receive all of the complaint and investigation material, and any representations from you on why the initial decision was incorrect.
- The reviewer will conduct further investigations if they consider that the initial investigation was insufficient.
- You will be sent a further acknowledgement letter giving:
 - The contact details of the reviewer
 - The process to be followed
 - Timeframes for the appeal

Once the internal review is complete, you will be informed what the decision is and what the external appeal options are.

10. Monitoring and evaluation

- As part of our drive for continuous improvement, we review our complaints management process regularly to identify trends in complaints and areas of service needing improvement.
- We record relevant complaints centrally to enable effective monitoring and evaluation.
- Written records of the outcome of complaints and appeals are retained as appropriate, in order to provide a report on the handling of such matters and any common themes arising, and this will be overseen by the Ethics & Sustainability Committee.
- Where this is the case, these will be implemented in order to improve the service and may be shared across service areas where there is benefit in doing so.
- The implementation of lessons learnt will be monitored to ensure that opportunities for improvement are not missed.
- It is important to ensure data protection requirements are adhered to and therefore care will be taken to ensure sensitive details are not recorded.