Making a complaint: England, Northern Ireland and Wales

See all updates

We are committed to providing high-quality customer services. We use information from complaints to help us improve our services.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

Making a complaint will not affect, in any way, the level of service you receive from us nor will it affect your chances of getting a grant from us in the future.

What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us.

What can I complain about?

You can make a complaint about your contact with our staff, a grant application that you have made or a grant awarded to you by us or NHMF.

You can complain if you think that:

- ‘maladministration’ has taken place (for example, if we have delayed, made mistakes in, or failed to follow the procedures in our application process)
- we have failed to give you access to information or have given you incorrect advice or information
- we have not treated you politely
- we have discriminated against you or not treated you fairly

However, if your complaint is about your application for funding, we can only review our decision again if:

- we discover (through dealing with a complaint) that we did not follow the published procedures for assessing your application
- you can show that we have misunderstood a significant part of your application
- you can show that we did not take notice of relevant information

What can’t I complain about?

There are some things we cannot deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:

- our decision on a funding application if we have followed our decision-making process correctly

- Any fraud you think may have taken place. You should report this to our Finance Department: Email: enquire@heritagefund.org.uk or notify the police.
- Our published policies or any UK government policy on heritage:
    - if you want to comment on our policies, please contact our Customer Services team: Email: enquire@heritagefund.org.uk , Phone: 020 7591 6044
    - if you want to comment on any UK government policy on heritage, please contact: Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 100 Parliament Street London SW1A 2BQ, Email: enquiries@culture.gov.uk, Phone: 020 7211 6000
    - if you want to comment on any policy set by the Northern Ireland Assembly or Welsh Government, please contact:
        - Northern Ireland Assembly , Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure Causeway Exchange, 1–7 Bedford Street Belfast BT2 7FB, Email: private.office@dcalni.gov.uk
        - Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ, Email: customerhelp@gov.wales, Phone: 0300 0604400 (Welsh)

How do I complain?

To make a complaint you should contact the office you first dealt with who will try to put things right.

When complaining please tell us:

- your full name and contact details
- as much as you can about the complaint (tell us what happened, when it happened and who dealt with you)
- how you want us to resolve the matter

If you are unsure who to speak to or if you do not want to speak to the person involved in your complaint, contact the Customer Services team:

- The National Lottery Heritage Fund, 4th Floor, Cannon Bridge House, 25 Dowgate Hill, London, EC4R 2YA . Email: enquire@heritagefund.org.uk, Phone: 020 7591 6044
- If you have a complaint relating to NHMF please contact us by: Email: enquiries@nhmf.org.uk, Phone: 020 7591 6113

What happens when I complain?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint. If you are an applicant or grant recipient and your complaint is about the way we have used our powers to make, refuse or manage funding, we have a three-stage process. If you are a member of the public or a third party, or you wish to complain about your contact with our staff we have a two-stage process.

Stage one

If you are not satisfied with the service you have received contact the office you first dealt with within 12 weeks of the action or decision about which you are complaining. They will try to resolve your complaint. This could mean an explanation and apology and immediate action to resolve the problem. We hope that we can settle complaints as

quickly as possible in this way. It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them soon after any issues arise.

We will acknowledge your complaint within three working days of receipt. We will also tell you who is dealing with your complaint and when you can expect a reply. We aim to respond to your complaint within 15 working days. We will let you know if it is likely to take longer.

If you are complaining about a grant application that you have made, we recommend that you do not reapply for the same project whilst you are in the complaint process.

Stage two

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive at stage one, you can take this further by writing to our Chief Executive:

- The National Lottery Heritage Fund, 4th Floor, Cannon Bridge House, 25 Dowgate Hill, London, EC4R 2YA . Email: Chief-Executive@heritagefund.org.uk

You must do this within four weeks of receiving our response to stage one. Within three working days of receiving your complaint we will contact you to say that we have received it.

In most cases, you will receive a reply within 10 working days. If we cannot give a full reply in this time, we will tell you why and when you are likely to receive it.

Stage three

If you are an applicant or grant recipient, and you are not satisfied with the Chief Executive's response and your complaint is about the way we have used our powers to make, refuse or manage funding, you can then move on to stage three. If you are a member of the public or a third party, or you wish to complain about your contact with our staff, please refer to the 'What if I'm still dissatisfied' section below.

If you are able to progress to stage three you can refer your complaint to the Independent Complaints Reviewer (ICR). The ICR is not part of our organisation and their investigations and recommendations are independent. You can ask the ICR to look at your complaint, or our Chief Executive can ask them to do this. There is no charge to you for using this service.

The ICR cannot consider complaints that have not gone through the procedure set out in this document. If you want the ICR to consider your complaint, you must contact them within four weeks of receiving our Chief Executive's reply. They will acknowledge your complaint within five working days of receiving it.

The ICR has the power to decide whether or not to investigate a complaint, and they will explain their reasons if they decide not to investigate.

If the ICR investigates your complaint and finds that it is justified, they will recommend ways for us to put things right, and how to prevent a similar situation in future. Our usual practice is to publish ICR's reports on our website, but we will only do this with your permission.

The ICR aims to issue a full report within three months of agreeing terms of reference. Where the investigation takes longer the ICR will be in touch to explain why. We will normally make any changes the ICR recommends to our current

procedures as quickly as possible.

The ICR cannot reverse funding decisions or make comments or changes to our legal responsibilities and policies on awarding grants.

If you wish to refer your complaint to the Independent Complaints Reviewer please contact the Customer Services Team and we will make the arrangements for you.

- The National Lottery Heritage Fund, 4th Floor, Cannon Bridge House, 25 Dowgate Hill, London, EC4R 2YA . Email: enquire@heritagefund.org.uk, Phone: 020 7591 6044
- If you have a complaint relating to NHMF please contact us by: Email: enquiries@nhmf.org.uk Phone: 020 7591 6113

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

If, after we have fully investigated, you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (England, Northern Ireland and Wales) to look at it.

One of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's roles is to consider complaints that public bodies have not acted properly or fairly or have provided a poor service. The Ombudsman is independent of the Government and the civil service, and has wide powers to investigate.

The Ombudsman does not normally investigate complaints if they have not been through our complaints procedure first. If you have completed all relevant stages of our complaints procedure and you are still unhappy you can contact your Member of Parliament (MP) and ask them to send your complaint to the Ombudsman. MPs' contact details can be found at www.parliament.uk

The Ombudsman's services are free. For more information contact their customer helpline. The contact details are: Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (England, Northern Ireland and Wales), Email: phso.enquiries@ombudsman.org.uk Phone: 03450154033.

Judicial Review

A judicial review is where a judge examines your complaint to see whether we have behaved illegally. The judge cannot rule that we must change a funding decision, but they can ask us to reconsider our decision. If you wish to seek a judicial review you must bring a claim within three months of the decision that gave rise to such a claim.

Getting help to make your complaint

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help customers access and use our services. If you have any particular communication needs, or need information in other languages or in another format, please contact the Customer Services team, Email: enquire@heritagefund.org.uk Phone: 020 7591 6044

Your personal information

All personal information will be treated in line with our responsibilities under current data protection legislation. We will do our best to keep all complaints confidential. However, we may need to release limited information so we can investigate the issues you have raised.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, we may also have to release certain information if we are asked for it. You can get information on the Freedom of Information Act from the Information Commissioner's Office. Their contact details are:

Information Commissioner's Office: Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF. Email: casework@ico.org.uk , Phone: 030123113 or 01625545745, Fax: 01625524510. Website: www.ico.org.uk